

AN ANALYSIS OF STATE POLICY
IMPLEMENTATION ON SCHOOL CONSOLIDATION:
WORKING FROM THE BOTTOM UP

A Dissertation
Presented to
the School of Education
Drake University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

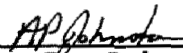
by Alan L. Meyer
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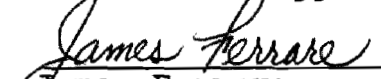
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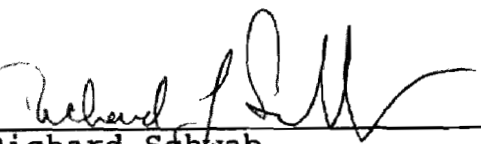
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AN ANALYSIS OF STATE POLICY
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An abstract of a Dissertation by
Alan L. Meyer
October 1995
Drake University
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The Problem: The problem of this study was to provide an analysis of Iowa's state policy on whole grade sharing and school consolidation. The study was designed to ascertain if the policies of the state of Iowa were effective in encouraging small rural school districts to whole grade share and follow up with school consolidation.

Procedure: Four whole grade sharing school districts were chosen for the study. District administrators were interviewed. Questions were asked to determine the influence of state policies in aiding or impeding the districts to consolidate.

Findings: The findings were that mandates from state agency levels do make a difference on how a school district may plan, but not always in the manner that the state agency may desire. Inducements from the state level could influence how school districts reacted to state mandates, but not every school district responded in the same manner. Local conditions within local school districts influenced how the local districts responded to state initiatives. Community traditions, concern for educational quality, district financial health, district facilities and the state efforts combined to produce outcomes that were desired by the state and outcomes that defied state intentions.

Conclusions: Policy makers can provide mandates and inducements that cause citizens at local levels of government to make changes in the makeup of local school districts, however not all state attempts will be successful. Local control and values still play a strong part in the decision making process at the local level.

Recommendations: Studies of the process of sharing, whether or not it led immediately to consolidation should be conducted five and ten years after the successful mergers to see what has changed, especially assessing whether long term conditions have changed sufficiently to support a different outcome or reinforced the present outcome.

Since state policy can make a difference, mandates and support, carefully measured, can cause change, but not always. In the final analysis, this issue is like so many other state policy issues in being about how we govern ourselves in a federalist democracy.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I would like to recognize and thank the professional and support staff of the Schaller/Crestland school district, the building administrators and especially the district/board secretary, Julie McClintic and elementary secretary, Lois Kestel, for their patience and support during the long and time consuming process that resulted in the attainment of my Ed. D. at Drake University. I would also like to recognize the School Board and the Schaller/Crestland District which provided encouragement and support for my pursuit of the advanced degree, and for providing such a fertile experience in whole grade sharing and school consolidation.

I want to recognize the effort and support of the cadre of instructors and professors of Drake University with special thanks to Perry Johnston who prodded me and helped me to focus my study on those things that really mattered. Without his patience and curiosity about whole grade sharing and consolidation Iowa style, I might have procrastinated till the year 2000. A big thanks to James Romig and Richard Schwab for their occasional kick where it made a difference between quitting and completion. And to Bonnie Porter for the hot coffee, the countless messages relayed and the petty paperwork detail that she did for me and countless other students.

I want to express appreciation to my parents, especially mom, for their assistance and trust in my ability to start and finish the project. I want to say thanks to my wife's parents for their support and to all of our family members who encouraged us in the process.

My wife, Patricia, and my children Shari, Shelli, Brett and Shonna, are to be commended for their motivation and their helpfulness in my effort. At no time did they allow me to quit or stop. The time spent from family activities was a sacrifice on their part, but their tolerance and encouragement made the final draft possible. I would like to dedicate this research project and all that it means to me and the future, to my wife and my children: it was as much a part of their life as it was of mine.

God bless all of you, you made the difference. Thank You! Dr. @m

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The K-12 Public School system of Iowa has been undergoing fundamental changes regarding its structure since the late 1980s and early 1990s. The change process has involved staff and administrative sharing, whole grade sharing(WGS), and consolidation. The change activities have resulted in a restructuring of many of the smaller independent rural districts of Iowa into larger consolidated school districts. The impetus for this restructuring often came from outside the smaller school districts: the legislature, special interest groups, and the Iowa Department of Education (Department of Education, Iowa 1993).

The result has been that many of the school districts that had experienced shared administrators and some form of whole grade sharing were consolidated into one autonomous school district. There was an exception to this occurrence between two shared programs that did not have the same result, whether by design or some other reason. The intent of this study was to examine what happened with those two specific cases and with two whole grade sharing arrangements that did result in consolidation. Why did the four whole grade sharing districts not go into consolidation as did the four other school districts?

Purpose

The purpose of the study was to add to the knowledge of state policy making. In the instance of whole grade sharing and school consolidation as a result of sharing, did the policies of the Iowa Legislature work towards getting small rural schools to whole grade share, to share other resources, and to eventually consolidate? How were the policies implemented in the four cases that led to whole grade sharing and, in the two cases, consolidation? There is much we do not know about how legislation gets implemented or what its perceived effects are, but hunches have emerged. It was hoped that eventually theories would be developed based on the experience gained from playing out a variety of such "hunches" (Kuhn & Beam, 1982).

Statement of the Problem

The problem of this study was to examine the implementation of a state policy that encouraged small rural school districts to share grades and to consolidate. The research effort was to describe and analyze specifically whole grade sharing as a state initiative intended to effect more school district consolidation.

The following research questions were used as a guide for this study:

1. What was the specific legislation that addressed the whole grade sharing(WGS) process, the financial incentives to share grades, and the then current legislative context(i.e. State Standards)?

2. What were the school districts' local environments: their demographic history, their politics, their financial background and other personal or community factors that may have influenced implementation?
3. What were the actual processes of implementation at the local level of whole grade sharing(WGS) policy and/or consolidation activities as a response to state legislative policies?
4. What helped or hindered the implementation process?
5. What conclusions can be drawn about the efficacy of the Iowa state policy of WGS as a means of consolidating school districts?

The School Laws of Iowa of 1990 contain the New School Standards under Section 256. The Standards affected all schools in the State of Iowa by mandating the number of academic, vocational and fine arts courses that high schools and middle schools would have to offer, the sequence of these courses, and a number of student oriented services that would have to be implemented over a period of three years. School districts that could not meet these new standards would be given a period of time to come into compliance or face eventual management by the state and the future dissolution of the district.

Whole grade sharing and sharing of students was covered in Section 282 of the Iowa Code. This section detailed the how to process of student sharing and the financial incentives that were provided to school districts that did become involved in the process. Student and whole grade sharing provided incentives that reflected increased student weighting for the purpose of state financing at the local level. The same was true for teacher sharing (256 & 257 Iowa

Code) and administrative (442 & 257 Iowa Code) sharing incentives.

The intent of the Iowa Policy was to encourage small rural school districts to enter into whole grade sharing activities with their neighboring school districts which could result in consolidation. The state policy provided financial incentives that encouraged school districts to share resources and at the same time increase the financial resources available to the district to do the things that they might not have been able to do without the incentives. The intent of the research project was to examine the implementation of the state policy and other current policies that would impact the state policy regarding whole grade sharing, other sharing activities, and school consolidation.

Operational Definitions

Consolidation/reorganization: two or more public school districts agreeing via the ballot box to become one united, independent school district.

Shared district administrative unit: two or more public school districts sharing one superintendent. For the purpose of this study, it will specifically refer to the shared superintendent.

Shared district superintendent: a superintendent who works for two or more independent public school districts, each

with its own board of directors and legal authority to operate their school district, develop and set policy, and hire and fire district personnel.

Single district administrative unit: a single independent public school district with one superintendent, one school board, and one set of school district policies.

Shared Teacher/Staff: Professional staff who are/were under contract to one school district but spent a portion of the regular teaching day in another district teaching students of the other district.

Whole grade sharing: two or more public school districts which share or transport entire classes or grade units to a cooperating neighboring district for delivery of educational services.

Limitations

The study is limited to eight rural school districts in Iowa which have entered into whole grade sharing agreements forming four working high school districts. Two of the whole grade sharing agreements have resulted in recent school district consolidations. All of the communities that form part of the school districts in the study are rural, the economy is primarily agriculturally based, the communities are not racially or ethnically diverse and are typical of many small midwestern communities. The purpose of the study was not to compare the districts but to inform state policy

makers and state education departments of the experience from the point of view of some of the participants who were effected by the state mandates and whole grade sharing/consolidation inducements provided by the state.

Methodology

This section describes the research methodology and design of the study. Selection of the districts studied are broadly described and the persons to be interviewed are detailed. The interview questions are presented along with a detailed description of how they were analyzed.

The School Districts that were chosen for this study had many commonalties. They were all in northern Iowa, all had shared administrators at one time, and all had entered into whole grade sharing activities. All the school districts relied primarily on the agri-business industry for their financial base. Each district was considered to be rural with rural Iowa values.

The number of districts involved in the study were eight before the consolidations took place, and six after four of the districts consolidated. The districts were more similar than they were dissimilar in composition, wealth factors, long term stability of staff and the mobility of the student/family population. Many of the teacher/administrative staff have been around during the whole grade sharing process, the shared administrator process and the consolidation effort.

This study involved two recently consolidated districts and four districts that have been involved in administrative sharing and whole grade sharing for a period of four or more years. The two recently consolidated districts represented four different districts prior to consolidation, which had gone through the process of shared administration and whole grade sharing for a period of four to five years. The sharing process resulted in overwhelming voter approval for consolidation.

The focus of the study was the information provided by the administrators of the six districts. The respondents that were used for the in-depth interview process were the current superintendents and principals of the four non-consolidated districts which form two whole grade sharing entities and the superintendents and building principals of the two school districts that have consolidated after whole grade sharing. The number of administrators involved in these discussions was sixteen.

Interview sessions revolved around the five research questions presented in Chapter I. The questions were garnered from two sources. One source was the review of literature on consolidation and school sharing. The second source was from an interview session with five superintendents of ten former school districts that had shared administration and whole grades and had consolidated into five school districts within the time frame of 1988 to 1994 but who were not a part of this study. The concepts

from the literature and the interviews formed the basis of the interview schedule and the in-depth probes for the sessions with the involved personnel of the consolidated and non-consolidated school districts.

Assurances of confidentiality had to be guaranteed for the districts involved in the study as well as the individual participants. Trust was of paramount concern to allow for openness and spontaneity of comment and information. Records were kept that included audio recording and handwritten scripting where possible and practical. Participants were informed and allowed to react to both methods of data accumulation, and objections and resistance were noted in order to get the most information and cooperation as possible.

Aside from the statutes and regulations reviewed, dimensions of implementation that needed to be addressed in this study concerned the basic community characteristics and the demographic features of the school districts involved in the study. In addition, processes of implementation were examined and used to assist in the development of the questions which would later be used in the interviews.

Information was obtained from a variety of sources to create a frame or picture of each school district involved in the study. The demographic information was gleaned from the basic Iowa Department of Education records and the records of the Iowa Association of School Boards. Those records included district enrollment histories, the

geographical size of the districts involved, the financial snapshots of the school districts, and the names of the school district administrators during the time period examined.

Information regarding the statutes and regulations of Iowa were taken from the School Laws of Iowa manual distributed by the Iowa Department of Education, which was dated through the 1990 Legislative Session. The manual contained all of the regulations that were relevant to the WGS and consolidation processes of this study. A brief summary of those laws, statutes and regulations is located in Appendix A. The brief was compiled by three legal experts who were involved in the process of whole grade sharing and consolidation in Iowa. Two of the attorneys were in private practice and one was the legal representative of the Iowa Department of Education.

The third source of information was the interview process of administrators of the school districts chosen for the study. A set of questions was developed that elicited responses about WGS and, where applicable, the consolidation process. The designed interview questions filled in the information needed to satisfy the elements of the research questions that were not answered by the examination of other sources.

Interview Questions

1. [Lead Question] Describe for me the planning process you went through as a district and as an administrator for whole grade sharing and/or consolidation. (Brotsky

& Masciandaro, 1992; Sybouts & Bartling, 1988; Peshkin, 1982; Gibson, 1991)

2. What role did state policy and the availability of additional state and local revenues play in the decision to go into a whole grade sharing effort with a neighboring school district. [Follow-up Question] Did this consideration outweigh those that would affect the local communities? (Leisey & Others, 1990; Berlin, Cienkas, & Jensen. Mar 1989; Canter, 1986.)
3. What were the various barriers or facilitators that influenced the whole grade sharing/consolidation process? [Follow-up questions as probes] What was the role of the administrative team in leading the districts to whole grade sharing/consolidation? What were the specific things that the Supt. and building principals did that led to a successful whole grade sharing/consolidation effort? (Canter, 1986; White, 1986; Woodward, 1986)
4. What changed about each community through the whole grade sharing/consolidation process? [local control] (Benton, 1992; Sybouts & Bartling, 1988; Kay, 1982)
5. What were the significant differences you saw in your whole grade sharing/consolidated school district over what you saw before the whole grade sharing/consolidation? (Berlin et al., 1989; Haller, 1992; Sher, 1988; Hallanan, 1992; Nachtigal & Haas, 1988.)
6. The Iowa whole grade sharing process had many mandated requirements for meetings, hearings, publications, notices and time lines before it could be implemented; did these processes help or hinder the outcome of the consolidation process? (Appalachia, 1988)
7. Did the whole grade sharing process help to overcome many of the problems associated with a school consolidation? (Leisey & Others, 1990; Peshkin, 1982; Kyriacou & Harriman, 1993; Lutz, 1990)
8. What role did local control and community interests play during the whole grade sharing/consolidation process of your school districts' restructuring process? (DeYoung & Howley, 1992; Stephens, 1986; Smith & DeYoung, 1988)
9. What were the things that you would do/ recommend to do differently if you had to do the whole grade sharing/consolidation process over again? (Galvin, 1986)

Findings were written in the descriptive form for each of the districts involved in the study. Answers that varied from one district perspective for each of the combined districts were noted as a separate district issue. The responses from the consolidated district's administrators were noted as responses representing the new district. Variations have become part of the anecdotal record to provide the setting of activities that occurred in each district's sharing and/or consolidation process. Demographic information was displayed in a table format. Another table format was used to list in brief form the major descriptors that were gleaned from the respondents about their respective school district's activities. Those highlighted responses were aligned with a brief descriptor of the interview questions.

Researcher Bias

The researcher was very close to the process and policy implementation that was the emphasis of the study. The closeness required extra effort to remain unbiased in the development process, the information gathering process, and the interpretation process. The researcher used interviews from five superintendents who had experienced whole grade sharing and consolidation to help guard against bias in the development of the questionnaire. Careful consideration was given to all aspects of the study as it progressed to keep any feelings or emotions from becoming a part of the outcome

of the study. My dissertation advisor was provided transcripts of the interviews as a means of checking the final writing with what the interviewees said.

The researcher's experience provided a unique insight into the application of state policies regarding whole grade sharing and consolidation. This insight proved valuable in creating the interview questions and going through the interview process by enabling the interviewer and participants to engage in conversation the nuances of which were readily understood by both.

Organization of the Study

This study presents the background of the problem, the statement of the problem, the purpose of the research and the methodology of the study in Chapter 1. Chapter 2 presents a review of the literature relevant to the study, and Chapter 3 includes responses to the statement of the problem and the research questions found in Chapter 1. Finally Chapter 4 presents a summary, conclusions, and recommendations for policy makers, administrators, and for further research.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Schools are among some of the most complex organizations that need some kind of management or leadership. The demands on public education are placed on schools by the interests of many constituencies. The interests of these constituencies may have been far removed from the actual function of the school's purpose. "Schools reflect a social order negotiated within a complex set of professional, organizational, cultural, and environmental constraints and opportunities, and is always subject to re-negotiation. It is thus a 'temporary' order, highly susceptible to internal and external threats to stability" (Greenfield, 1986).

School districts have had to work within a set of unique rules that at times were competing and contradictory. Not all demands placed on schools were even compatible with the school's mission, purpose or goals:

External factors include demographic forces, political ideologies, technological developments, religious differences, ethnocultural heterogeneity, and economic growth/decline. These forces affect the demand placed upon schools and school systems by affecting the size and nature of their clientele: parents and children. Demand, in turn, affects the school and school system, including the internal political, technological and organizational forms that are used. (Briggs & Lawton, 1989)

The recognized similarities of the public schools as organizations made them appear to be more alike than

different. However, there were many factors that separated schools from each other so that they were not look-alike composites. Leadership, organization, and culture differed from one school to another. The composition of like elements varied from school district to school district, or in larger urban areas from one school building to another. Schools differed substantially in three particular areas. They differed in the available resources, the demographic and economic composition of the student body, and the size of the student body population served (Goldman, Kempner, Powell, & Schmuck, 1990).

Change in school has occurred for one or more of the five following reasons:

1. The environment changed.
2. The technology changed.
3. The organization grew(or diminished).
4. The political climate changed(legislative desires and priorities).
5. Leadership changed. Reorganization is often one of the first initiatives of new leaders.(Bolman & Deal, 1991)

In the rural communities, the school was seen as a major visible entity of the community's organizations. The people who were a part of the system have come under more scrutiny of the local constituencies within and outside of the system than they did in other areas. The function of the school organization in rural areas was the extension of the rural community in which it was located. The school effort was a continuing process that extended the culture of the community, thus the connection of the school and community.

The bulk of a public school administrator's time was spent working within the environment of the school organization. The work place became a site where the people involved directed major effort and energy toward making a difference (Carlson, 1990). The rural school's ability to manage the diversity of its environment was dependent on its ability to manage its resources in a way that maximized its buying and academic potential. Inter-district sharing of services has made this possible and attractive; needed are a few modifications designed to enhance flexibility, coordination, and supervision" (Swanson, 1983).

Historical

The historical fact of consolidation was obvious when one looked at the data regarding the diminished number of school districts across the nation. In 1988 the National Center for Educational Statistics noted that from the end of World War II until the mid 1980s, the number of school districts in the United States dropped from 101,382 to 15,747. This change was primarily the result of thousands of small, rural school districts consolidating. Consolidation has become both a solution for small, rural school problems and a school reform policy encompassing a wide variety of problems (Berliner, 1990). The success of the school consolidation movement has been remarkable, at least when "success" is measured by the declining number of American school districts (Haller, 1992).

Some educators contend that consolidation has served its purpose of eliminating many one-room schools and inefficient small districts and that this trend will soon pass (Ornstein, 1989).

Under the rubric of school 'improvement', many places that once provided schooling no longer do; for they have been improved out of existence....As rural and small schools are typically the target of school consolidation, the threat of school closures persists as perhaps the most important concern in many American rural communities. (DeYoung & Howley, 1992)

Consolidation was a subject most small, rural communities approached gingerly, if at all. Citizens had too much tradition invested in the local schoolhouse, the sports teams, and the community's educational heritage to do otherwise. Because of the traditions, many communities only consolidated under duress, and they resisted bitterly all the way and after the fact of consolidation (Davis, 1992).

Schools in rural areas have been the focal points of educational and social pursuits of the communities in which they are located. Rural residents took great pride in their schools, the contributions they made to the community, the center of attention they provided for the community, and the financial impact they may have had on the local community economy. Schools were the facilitators of student interaction with others; it was a great equalizer of social differences. Consolidation changed these communal attributes making it imperative, therefore, that any consolidation plan be well thought out and focused on the total educational and

social needs of the students (Rincones, 1988; Sybouts & Bartling, 1988; DeYoung & Howley, 1992).

Mandates

The consolidation effort has traditionally been promoted by state level change agents. The rationale for school and district consolidation has always rested on the twin pillars of equity and efficiency (Haller, 1992). State legislatures got involved in the process by setting mandates and requirements for school districts that were financially difficult if not impossible to meet because of school district student size limitations.

The traditional challenges that small, rural, and poor school districts faced were combined with the recent rush for state-mandated school improvements which was generally inadequately funded. This combination often pressed administrators and boards of small and rural local districts into seeking reorganization as a last resort (Lutz, 1990). In some cases, in or at the smallest and most remote schools, the curriculum was often so limited that it did not qualify students to meet state graduation requirements or entrance requirements to college (Berliner, 1990). An example of the curriculum phenomena was one of the reasons given for the consolidation of five rural schools in Nevada County, Arkansas. State mandates/goals required more course offerings and advanced courses in math, science, foreign languages and the arts than the separate districts offered.

The legislative mandate that initiated this action was the Arkansas Educational Standards Act (Davis, 1992).

Several trends in the 1970s and the 1980s increased the power of State Education Agencies (SEA) with respect to small and rural schools. Influences that have allowed this to happen were block grants from the federal level, the discretionary application of federal funds which gave the state more power over local schools, and the reform movement of the 1980s which was mandated at the state level, not at the local level. SEA's have also been given greater power by state legislatures to consolidate small rural districts or influence the process through financial incentives (Lutz, 1990).

Small school districts that were struggling financially to fulfill state educational reform mandates found that "when the state provides substantial monetary incentives for merging (as some states do), consolidation becomes an attractive option. Whatever the reason, at least ten states (Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, Massachusetts, New York, North Carolina, Rhode Island, Texas, Utah, and Vermont) have recently renewed their efforts to consolidate the small school districts within their borders (Haller, 1992).

The state of Georgia used a financial enticement to get its smaller school districts to consider consolidation during the 1980s. Known as the Quality Basic Education Act of Georgia (QBE), section 20-2-291 states:

A school system will receive a 50% reduction in its cost to consolidate its small schools if these consolidations result in base size schools and they are consistent with the K-5, 6-8, 9-12 organizational pattern or contain all the students in the grade span within the school system.

The size of the high school was based on a student number of 850 pupils. Systems not meeting this criteria would have to levy locally to provide the necessary academic criteria. Systems not meeting the number criterion would need to have at least one senior year elective in each course area on an alternative year basis (Leisey & others, 1990).

Almost all jurisdictions that forced consolidation failed to document the improvements that they purported would result from building or district closings. One may well assume that political power and ideological motives, not pedagogical motives, accounted for rural school consolidation in the United States (DeYoung & Howley, 1992).

Opposition to school consolidation was present in many rural areas of the nation. Because of this opposition to school consolidation, officials in many states have begun to look for ways to obtain the benefits of consolidation without eliminating schools or districts. One method was for neighboring districts to share programs and personnel. Minnesota, for example, encouraged this trend by providing up to 75% of the cost of shared secondary-school facilities and programs. Iowa provided between 5% and 50% extra funding to local school districts that shared course offerings, teachers, administrators, and school buildings. However,

Iowa did set a time limit on the availability of these incentives (Ornstein, 1993).

Legislation

School systems of every size struggled to meet rising demands on limited budgets, but for small school systems, the smaller budgets and fewer economies of scale posed special problems (Brackenbury, Follo, & Ginopolis, 1990). "Justification for school district consolidation is made on the basis of either reducing cost or increasing educational quality. Some cost reductions may be realized through certain economies of scale in some consolidations, but it is by no means automatic" (Thurston & Clauss, 1985). State-level policy makers and educational professionals typically head the efforts to consolidate rural schools based on the myth of cost effectiveness or accountability (DeYoung & Howley, 1992).

A perceived lack of voter confidence at the local level has led power brokers to make decisions for the local districts. During the late 1980s and early 1990s in Illinois, the concern for greater efficiency did not appear to be the driving force behind locally initiated school consolidation. There was an economic or financial factor that was fueling consolidation. Many districts citizens could not and would not support new taxes for the improvements needed at the local level for technology, teacher support or facilities (Thurston & Clauss, 1985).

Because of the lack of financial support at the local level, the power was placed into the hands of those outside of the local district.

As indicated earlier, the state of Georgia entered into the act of forced school consolidations with the passage of the Quality Basic Education Act(QBE) in the late 1980s. This reform package included a push at the state level to consolidate smaller schools or school districts to create larger schools or school districts. The decision process for consolidation was left to the local county school boards. The lack of local involvement in that process has caused considerable bitterness resulting in unfriendly behavior and attitudes (Leisey & others, 1990).

Consolidation in Georgia allowed the County Board of Education to make the decision to consolidate if there was not a bond referendum involved. The district's registered voters did not take part in the actual decision to consolidate the local school districts; however, the voters did vote on whether to fund a bond issue if it was a part of the consolidation consideration. In Georgia, the state was the ultimate decision maker when it came to school consolidation. The state withheld money from the schools that it deemed should consolidate and rewarded the schools that did consolidate according to the state's guidelines. The local school board decided the local issue to consolidate or not in accordance with what the state would do as a result of local board action or non-action. The

local voters had little say in the course of events except at the ballot box when local board members were up for re-election (Leisey & others, 1990).

In Arkansas, the board had the legal right to consolidate school districts. However, the district board needed to get community support if they were going to need to raise revenues to pay for needed facility improvements or new buildings, issues that required voter approval (Davis, 1992).

The Iowa consolidation process involved a petition filed by registered voters to the local school board. An appeal hearing was scheduled before a regional board, an appeal process was in place for those affected by the hearing outcomes, and consolidation was affected by district voter approval or rejection.

Outcomes

Consolidation was thought to bring about more effective schools by increasing the tax base, the quality of professional personnel, the breadth of educational programs, special services, transportation facilities and by reducing overall educational costs per student (Ornstein, 1989). The outcomes have been debated and hotly contested. There have been instances of positive effects from the process; however, these seemed to be more specific than generalized. The problem was that the trade-offs may not have been in

balance and that each consolidation effort would be its own unique experience.

The consolidation of the five rural districts in Nevada County, Arkansas, have experienced some benefits through their effort. Student progress on the Arkansas Minimum Performance Tests showed significant gains. Metropolitan Achievement Test scores and ACT Test scores have also improved. The dropout rate has decreased. Significant savings were realized in utility bills for the one new modern facility as compared to five old buildings, savings in school lunch, transportation, staff savings such as one superintendent, and the reduction of 15 teachers. However, taxes were raised by as much as 55% in one community. Total student enrollment of the consolidated district was 750 K-12 (Davis, 1992).

A common lament in the consolidation has been the lack of documentation of outcomes. One recurring theme for which this has not been the case, however, has been in tracing the financial savings or lack of that would be realized by those schools that did consolidate. In an opinion paper, Hallanan asserted that while school regionalization or consolidation has been a topic of conversation for at least half of his 30 years in education, all studies regarding consolidation had one common fact, that consolidation is an expensive endeavor (Hallanan, 1992). What was expected was savings, generally what was realized has been additional expense.

Other negatives regarded the intrusion factor of outsiders interfering with "our schools". Consolidation of districts usually meant closing some schools. This has proven to be a serious and emotional matter, especially in small and rural school districts where the local school was a focal point of the community's identity. In many cases, state school officials, operating under the assumption that consolidation was cost-effective and enhanced student opportunity, have clashed with local townspeople who resented the interference of distant bureaucrats. Conflict created by school consolidations was not confined to parents and taxpayers. Various theories suggested that it may occur within schools-between students and staff and among students themselves (Haller, 1992). The process can be demoralizing to students, parents, and the community. Local taxpayers, who might normally have supported plans for saving money, have often refused to endorse consolidation (Ornstein, 1989).

Isolation from the old familiar school building or the local school board members exacerbated the feeling of not being a part of the school community. As school districts consolidated, parents felt distanced from the schools and powerless to affect policy. In rural areas, communities which always had a school may no longer have a building which is theirs (Berlin, et al., 1989).

The argument that bigger is better thus doesn't hold water with the constituents, but what of research? Decades

of research on appropriate school size failed to document anything like the benefits for large schools advertised during this century. Moreover, evidence that small schools actually blunt the negative effects of educational disadvantage on academic achievement continued to accumulate. Small-scale schooling in the form of "schools-within-schools" and "site-based management" were touted in current national reform rhetoric as paths to professionalism and responsiveness (DeYoung & Howley, 1992). Moreover, in the past decade, halfway measures, or policies that encouraged sharing of both management and instructional resources, has appeared in a number of states.

Sharing

Sharing of academic and vocational classes has been going on in small rural districts in Illinois since the mid 1980s. Students traveled to neighboring districts for part of their academic day; therefore, a school could concentrate on one particular area of emphasis and the sending school did not need to maintain that program in the home district (Thurston & Clauss, 1985). The same kind of sharing has been going on in Iowa since the early 1980's. Many rural districts in Maine and California reduced administrative costs and streamlined administrative practices by sharing superintendents (Berliner, 1990). Other forms of sharing included the concepts of partial grade sharing, partial reorganization at the high school level, clustering of

services for vocational schools, and the use of technology to share class offerings or administrative duties and staff development (Rincones, 1988).

Small school systems could have flexibility in programs and budgets if school boards and administrations were willing to work collaboratively with neighboring school systems (Brackenbury, et al., 1990). Sharing teachers or sharing students across district boundaries has improved curriculum for some districts who have taken advantage of these innovative educational concepts (Thurston & Clauss, 1985). Inter-district or other cooperative arrangements preserved small, rural districts and allowed them to benefit from collective enrollments, shared resources and economies of scale (Berliner, 1990).

Administrators, board members, teachers, and community members have increasingly worked across district lines for solutions to common problems. When enrollments have declined or budget constraints increased, consolidation has eventually emerged as an issue. If that occurred, the experiences of effective collaboration gave communities a strong case for preserving their school system's autonomy" (Brackenbury, et al., 1990). In some districts, however, sharing only postponed the inevitability of consolidation; in others, it has proven to be a feasible way to ensure autonomy and preserve the local school without sacrificing educational equity or operational efficiency (Berliner, 1990).

Sharing inducements have been legislated in many states (Iowa, Illinois, California, Minnesota) to encourage inter-school district cooperation. This has been an encouragement for the sharing concept as it has enriched the districts involved or relieved the local property tax burden. The availability of outside funding sources always gave collaboration a boost. When state funds for sharing programs diminished, the school system's desire to collaborate dwindled (Brackenbury, et al., 1990).

Successful sharing programs required trust between districts and within the district, communication, patience, sharing, and all of the other virtues that made such partnerships work. A part of any positive major school change was the education of the public and the staff and the open communications required to have a successful change process. A concession to get things to work in sharing and in consolidation has been to retain at least one school facility in each town (Brodsky & Masciandaro, 1992; Davis, 1992).

The approach to how a district became involved with sharing has proved important. Communication was an important aspect of any change endeavor, but perhaps more important was what was being communicated. The time districts spent developing the contractual and governance structures would have been better spent on developing communication with community and staff members and giving them more complete information on the purpose and operation of shared

programs. Factors that seemed less important at the time--common values, communication, and trust--turned out to be more important in the long run than the more mechanistic concerns of scheduling and budgeting (Brackenbury, et al., 1990).

Successful shared school programs were marked by certain strategies that lowered or raised conflict that arose over school closings or district changes. The strategies of education and communication, participation and involvement, facilitation and support, and negotiations and agreement lowered the levels of conflict. The least successful methodology was the authoritarian strategies of manipulation and co-option, and explicit and implicit coercion which increased the level of conflict (Brodsky & Masciandaro, 1992). If a shared program was going to work, conflict had to be kept to a minimum; the same observation was applied to school consolidation.

Whole Grade Sharing

A major strategy used for the implementation of school management restructuring in Iowa was the sharing of students by transporting whole grades to a neighboring district's facilities and sharing of the superintendent, a practice that enabled two or more school districts to contract for the services of one superintendent. Whole grade sharing began for the state of Iowa in the early 1980s. The practice was entered into when the Boards of Education of two or more school districts saw a resource advantage or a financial

incentive for the improvement of their educational program or district finances.

The restructuring process meant that schools have had to do things differently than they did in the past; this course of events has also changed the way schools will do things in the future. The past traditions and cultures of the school districts influenced the transition to the shared superintendency. Whole grade sharing helped to change a school district's identity. The education mission remained, but the traditions began to change.

The idea of sharing resources or personnel was a way of reframing the concepts about how school districts could deliver the educational experience. In Iowa in 1981-82, two school districts were sharing their high school and junior high students. In 1985-86 ten schools began whole grade sharing(WGS) activities, the next year 20 more school districts joined the process. In 1987/88, 42 school districts were involved in whole grade sharing; the next year saw 56 districts involved with whole grade sharing, and 84 districts were sharing in 1989/90. The largest number of whole grade sharing activities was in 1992/93 when 121 districts were doing some form of administrative and/or whole grade sharing(Department of Education, Ghan, 1994). During the 1993/94 school year, 88 school districts were engaged in some form of whole grade or classroom sharing, 125 districts were involved in athletic sharing programs, 48

districts shared a curriculum director and 97 districts were sharing teachers.

Whole grade sharing was a strategy that involved two or more totally separate districts that combined academic classes, extracurricular activities and faculties without officially combining the school districts themselves. Whole grade sharing was a concept that involved either a whole grade or a complete division such as the middle school grades or the high school classes. The middle school grades or divisions were often in an attendance center in one school district's buildings or facilities, while the high school grades were in an attendance center in the other district's buildings or facilities. The students were usually bused to their appropriate attendance center and the costs of offering these services were shared by the cooperating districts. This system of sharing was commonly referred to as two-way whole grade sharing.

A major hurdle in initial whole grade sharing agreements involved the location of the joint high school attendance center and the joint middle school attendance center. The relationship between the districts often became contentious when competing for the designated location of the high school, and the site of the high school athletic contests. The other attendance levels and activities seemed to be of little concern to either of the communities involved (Decker & Talbot, 1989). Ordinarily an elementary school had been kept in each district; two exceptions were

cited where one community ended up with both elementary schools in one center (Department of Education, 1993). A few examples of one-way whole grade sharing also existed. In this arrangement, one district's entire high school attended a neighboring district's facilities without any students being sent back to the other district.

One case of three-way sharing has been in existence since 1991/92 in northwest Iowa where each of three school districts housed their own kindergarten through fourth grade. One district had the combined fifth and sixth grades of the three school districts, another district had the combined seventh and eighth grades of the participating districts, and the third partner had the combined high school classes at their facility.

Two other unique sharing arrangements existed in Iowa that combined kindergarten through eighth grade students at one school facility and the combined high school population at the other district's facility. This is referred to as whole district, or whole grade sharing K-12.

The predicted result of whole grade sharing was that many of the shared school operations and the shared administrative ventures would result in school district consolidation (Department of Education, 1993). These sharing experiences have resulted in ninety-five districts becoming involved in forty-seven school district consolidations in Iowa from 1985 to 1993. With very few exceptions, the mergers that have taken place in Iowa since 1985 first

consisted of a whole grade sharing contract that was negotiated between districts by the boards of education. An extremely small number of whole grade sharing or reorganization efforts have resulted in any type of litigation in Iowa during this transition period (Department of Education, 1994).

Director B. Buresh of the Minnesota State Department of Education shared that Minnesota has been experiencing sharing of the same type as Iowa: restructuring geared toward consolidation of small districts. Vermont's sharing experience varied from this scenario. Vermont had "Supervisory Districts" that encompassed districts of K-6 or K-8 that fed into a high school district. One such political entity, the Orleans-Essex-North Supervisory Union, had a Superintendent for the K-6 school districts of this Union, a Superintendent for the K-8 schools, and a Superintendent for the 7-12 district with resource sharing and decision making among the school districts a political reality (Personal communication with Dr. Perry Johnston, Advisor).

A telephone call to the Department of Education of Idaho personnel in 1993 revealed that the state of Idaho had one superintendent sharing experience by two school districts in 1992/93 that has since been nullified. There was another shared superintendent for the 1993/94 school year. However, there was sharing between districts of other staff members, teaching staff in particular.

The Washington School Administrators Association Director Moberly indicated that in 1993 the state of Washington had at least two current sharing activities. One situation was the Naselle School District where two people fulfilled the duties of superintendent and business manager. The situation existed because of the current retirement laws in Washington. The other example was a first year arrangement between the Boistfort and the PeEll schools; these two districts were small, rural school districts. In other states, some form of administrative and curriculum sharing has been taking place (Colorado State Department, 1990).

The State Legislature of Iowa provided financial incentives for those school districts in Iowa which participated in sharing of teachers, shared administrative and/or whole grade sharing programs. Each district that participated was given extra pupil weighting which resulted in additional state aid dollars for local schools as well as additional property tax revenues for the local districts involved. The state aid portion of the additional dollars generated was nearly 80%; the balance was generated from local property tax growth.

A recommendation of the study conducted by the Colorado State Department of Education indicated the success that incentives have had to encourage school district sharing. The Colorado State Department of Education's Recommendation No.1 was to "Create incentives for school districts to

utilize shared services, other cooperative arrangements, and the use of contracting in both the educational and the administrative areas" (Colorado State Department, 1990).

Consolidation: Summary of the Process

The literature has generally concluded that consolidation has not been positive, but the arguments in its favor have been numerous. Among the various arguments that have been used when the issue of rural school reorganization has been discussed were the following: small rural schools had just as good a program as larger schools; school size was not related to quality; education was a matter best reserved for local control; rural school children received more individual attention from teachers; the loss of the local school was a detriment to a community; and reorganization was not going to guarantee a better school experience for children (Sybouts & Bartling, 1988).

On the other side of these arguments has been a range of hypotheses that supposed consolidation would be the silver bullet of genuine school improvement. To date there is still not convincing information to prove that consolidation met the problems for which it has been advocated--those of finance, staff, facilities, and curriculum. Currently, according to some observers, no research evidence exists that adequately supports the claim that school consolidation has improved education. Under the guise of "good education", organized groups could make a

case for or against consolidation. It was not clear that any significant or lasting economies of scale have been generated when schools were made larger (Rincones, 1988; Ornstein, 1993; Haller, 1992; Sher, 1988).

Consolidation or school reorganization should not be done on the size criterion alone. Forcing school consolidation just to reduce the number of schools was an injustice to the educational community (Rogers, 1987). Consolidation should only have been considered if it created a better learning atmosphere and produced an improved school system. There needed to be a minimalization of the conflict involved in these situations [school closings] to have a result that had long term positive effects for both education and educators. The focus had to be on educational benefits and issues (Brodsky & Masciandaro, 1992).

Bitterness has often remained in the consolidated school communities where the local or county boards made the decision to consolidate and involvement of the other significant school district participants was not part of the process. Student and local community identities have been lost. The time devoted to "traveling curriculum" or on bus travel was seen as a negative. The rationale for creating larger schools continued to be that they were both more equitable and more efficient. But the evidence that these outcomes were regularly forthcoming was lacking. There was little evidence that school closings reduced per-pupil costs. It appeared that the strategy of closing schools to

save money has been largely a symbolic gesture in that closures may not be worth the added costs of transportation to the receiving schools. Thus school consolidation may foment dissension within a community without any apparent compensating benefits to the involved communities (Leisey & others, 1990; Haller, 1992).

Further, consolidation might not be worth the loss in educational benefits emanating from small school size (Valencia, 1984). Lutz contended that research suggests that what happens in the classroom should be the ultimate measure of the effectiveness of school reform (1990). Evidence suggested that small scale organization (both at the district and school levels) brought with it opportunities for positive results in the classroom. In the future, Valencia states that policy options should address ways to capitalize on such a link (1984).

The state of Iowa has seen an increase in school consolidations over the last ten years. School district consolidation has increased as a result of the WGS activities that were encouraged by the state legislature. In 1984-85, there were 438 public school districts that were operating a K-12 school district with only one district not having a functioning high school within the district. By the 1994-95 school year there were 390 public school districts of which only 354 had a functioning high school within its district. Fourteen more school districts have consolidated, the effective date of those new consolidations was July 1,

1995. Four other districts have filed consolidation petitions that will be effective in 1997 provided they are given voter approval.

Chapter 3

FINDINGS

This chapter describes the findings of the study. General demographic information for all districts studied is recorded, followed by detailed descriptions of the background and processes involved in all four district pairs that were involved in the whole grade sharing, consolidation, or both. A general summary of issues, across all districts, follows the data presentation (see Table 2, p.92).

Table 1 detailed the basic demographic information of school size by enrollment, the unspent spending authority of each district, the square miles of the separate districts, and the availability of dollars generated through the state incentives to share and consolidate. Shared student weighting generated dollars for each school district at a rate equal to the districts state cost per pupil.

The student enrollments have been steady or have grown for three of the whole grade sharing entities, however, the Proud-Proven (P-P) district has experienced a decline in enrollment since entering into their whole grade sharing program and consolidation.

All of the districts involved in the study experienced an increase in available resources for the school district since they entered into whole grade sharing and the state

provided the incentives. District size has not changed in

TABLE 1
Demographics

DISTRICT IDENTITY Column #	ITEMS: Student Numbers 1987/1994		Unspent Authority 1987/1994		Dist. Size Sq.Mi. 5	Student Weighting 1987/1994	
	1	2	3*	4*		6	7
Prd	308		\$231		81	10.8	
Prvn	142	411#	\$59	\$644^	59	16.6	8.7@
New	303		\$380		92	6.7	
Fine	182	527#	\$375	\$1282^	94	.5	1.5@
CW	208	290	\$607	\$705	102	16.1	4.3@
Ltr	127	136	\$400	\$493	79	7.7	10.6@
Sdpt	293	299	\$429	\$815	80	2.9	25.0
Trvl	456	453	\$207	\$320	105	3.1	56.0

*: Dollars in thousands, \$231 is \$231,000

^: Dollars in thousands of the consolidated districts.

#: Student enrollment of the consolidated district.

+: The consolidated districts geographical size.

@: Weighted student #'s from sharing personnel/grades.

Prd: The Proud district which consolidated with Proven.

Prvn: The Proven district which consolidated with Proud.

New: The New district which consolidated with Fine.

Fine: The Fine district which consolidated with New.

CrWl: The CornWall district which shares with Later.

Ltr: The Later district which shares with CornWall.

Sdpt: The Sandpoint district which shares with Tourville.

Trvl: The Tourville district which shares with Sandpoint.

any of the districts but was included to give a snapshot of the district's physical makeup.

The additional student weighting each district was allowed through program sharing is shown in the 1987/88

column, the 1994/5 column shows the student weighting each district had during that year. In all but the Sandpoint and Tourville columns a decrease of weighted students is shown, indicating that the whole grade shared weighting incentives provided by the state of Iowa have expired in the other six districts.

The description of each of the paired districts that follows are discussed first in terms of the background of their cooperation, then by the process of implementation and the legislative context. Barriers and facilitators follows, ending with a description of the local community context.

THE NEW-FINE SCHOOL DISTRICT

Background

The consolidated New-Fine (N-F) School District is composed of three small rural towns. The communities are located in northwest Iowa on mostly flat prairie that is comprised of black soil . The district is heavily dependent on agriculture and agriculture related industry for its economic existence. A number of residents commute to other communities for employment in mostly agricultural related jobs. This school district was made up of two independent school districts until they began to whole grade share in 1989 and consolidated in the summer of 1993. One of the former districts had a Parochial elementary school of K-6 until the whole grade sharing arrangement, then the Parochial school went to a K-8 school. The consolidation of

the two school districts was the result of a strong favorable vote for consolidation in each school district.

Each school district had one attendance center for their own K-12 system and athletic facilities. The two school districts had shared high school sports during the 1988-89 school year, then whole grade shared the high schools and the middle schools from 1989 to 1993. During the 1991/92 school year, the districts went to full whole grade sharing with the K-3 and the high school at one site and grades 4 through 8 at the other site.

The Fine district had a full time superintendent who also acted in the capacity of K-12 principal. The Fine administrator served as the shared elementary principal during the whole grade sharing phase and was serving as the elementary principal in the consolidated district; he had served for 14 years in the separate and combined system. The high school and junior high social studies teacher of the Fine district was appointed to serve as the middle school principal for the whole grade sharing program and was retained in that position after consolidation; the middle school principal had been with the system for 14 years.

The New district had a superintendent who was also the elementary principal and had been the secondary (high school and junior high) principal. When the districts began the whole grade sharing process, the New district's superintendent became the shared superintendent for both districts. He had served the districts for 16 years in the

separate and the combined system. The secondary principal of the New district became the high school principal for the shared programs with a total tenure of 14 years in the same school community.

Implementation Process

The implementation process for whole grade sharing and consolidation of the New-Fine districts had to consider significant issues before planning a course of action. One of the first considerations by the participants from New and Fine was why did the districts want to whole grade share? The two districts examined the new State Standards of Iowa. The standards required a variety of school inputs/programs that would strap the New and the Fine districts for money in the future. The other item that caused grave concern for district viability was the student enrollment numbers. The Fine district had money but not the students to justify the expenditures that meeting the mandates would require. The New district had experienced an enrollment decline but was holding steady in student numbers, but the Fine district was seeing sharp declines in elementary numbers. The Fine district had adequate financial reserves that could stave off dissolution in the near future, but the New district could use an influx of resources. The financial incentives provided by the state for schools that did whole grade share were very convincing to both school boards that something should and could be done.

Prior to the successful whole grade sharing effort of New-Fine, the two districts had looked elsewhere for whole grade sharing arrangements before they settled on each other. Compatibility and long term survival were strong considerations in the development of the New-Fine school arrangement. Other considerations were the size of the proposed school student body, the transportation issues for parents, the use of current facilities, the long term vs. short term solutions, and the belief that what was being entered into was the sensible thing to do for both districts.

Contact was established between the school boards of the two districts by their superintendents. In the spring of 1988 surveys were conducted in each district to see if the board consensus regarding the choice of each district's constituents for whole grade sharing was correct. In the New and Fine districts the overwhelming choice for a sharing partner was the other district. A joint board meeting was held in June of 1988. The topics discussed were the curriculum and the state standards, how each requirement would be met, maintained, and improved through whole grade sharing. Additional joint board meetings followed.

Prior to each of the joint board meetings, the administrators of each district met together to discuss the agenda items for the joint board meetings. The administrators worked together to provide the boards with the best up-to-date information regarding the standards and

the probability that a shared system would meet and exceed the state standards. The additional money gained by the whole grade sharing was computed, the manner in which the facilities were to be used was laid out. Staffing considerations were discussed and proposals developed.

A sharing agreement was negotiated between the two districts. The contract was worked on by the district superintendents and an attorney who worked for both districts. Administrators of the new shared district represented both the former districts by having two people from each. Administrative positions were determined by the joint boards. After many meetings in each community, the boards met to begin the final process for coming to a whole grade sharing agreement. The official public hearings were held followed by the board votes in each district. Both boards were unanimous in their support for the whole grade sharing contract of the New Fine whole grade sharing district.

Legislative Context

The state mandates were the major reason cited by the participants that the school districts agreed to enter into whole grade sharing. The mandates prompted many school districts to look harder at what whole grade sharing could do. The administrative team felt that "the financial incentives to share and consolidate were frosting on the cake." The public could understand the meaning of additional dollars for improving and adding additional educational

programs. The dollars generated helped to enhance the curriculums and propel the New and Fine districts into the technology age. If the school districts were happy with the sharing program and the dollars generated, why not get the additional funding available through consolidation? A lack of incentives in the late 1970s and early 1980s had dampened sharing/consolidation talks between the Fine and New school districts with other school districts.

The perception of the administrators about the effect of the state policies was that the policies caused many school districts to form new school partnerships with other school districts. The administrators were in agreement that the mandates themselves didn't strengthen schools but actually made them weaker; the mandates were a hindrance to education. The mandated standards created concerns for boards and district longevity, but not quality education. Declining enrollment was a problem that the districts were experiencing; the mandates helped to make the matter more serious than it might have been. Neither district could meet the standards alone for very long, but together they could manage very well. The respondents expressed that without the standards the sharing for these two districts might not have happened when it did.

The time lines and requirements for public meetings and procedures helped the districts to achieve whole grade sharing. The process forced the New-Fine districts into a "lock step movement to get somewhere." The meetings helped

the district administration and board members to inform people, and provided a forum to dispel rumors for those people in attendance. The process helped people to have an opportunity to get answers to their questions and concerns. The process "allowed for and caused healing to take place," a time to formulate answers and define the process. The effort on the part of the administrators and the boards helped to overcome the problems and traditions and provided time to describe what was going to happen. The one respondent confirmed that "without a good set of guidelines and time lines the whole grade sharing for New Fine wouldn't have happened."

Barriers and Facilitators

The newspaper in the Fine community appeared to be the only major obstacle towards whole grade sharing in either community other than the apathy of those who didn't see a need to do anything. The one administrator shared that the possible reasons the newspaper was so opposed to the proposed whole grade sharing and later to the consolidation effort was that the Fine community would lose its high school; therefore, the local businesses would be hurt. More opposition was formed because of where the high school was to be located than on any other issue. In the case of the New-Fine proposal, the bigger community got the high school. The opinion of the Fine superintendent was that those businesses were already suffering and that the high school location would not save them anyway.

Some opponents expressed the opinion that the districts should hold on as long as possible, then do something; however, few people wanted to wait until it was too late to do anything. In the Fine community, there was more support to not do anything than there was opposition to the whole grade sharing proposal. The question was whether to act now or wait for the inevitable, or put another way, act now or die later?

The facilitators of the process were the boards of education and the effort of the school administrations to get out the facts of what sharing and consolidation could do for the districts. Trust building was another major endeavor. As the opposition presented arguments, the districts presented the facts in a manner of information and did not attack the opposition. Board members conducted a number of face to face and one on one information efforts. Each question that was posed was answered honestly and if more information was needed, it was followed up as soon as possible.

Administrators worked in each community to build trust in the district's efforts to meet district and community needs in the proposed shared and consolidated district. All major decisions were held in the open and before the public. No hidden agendas were allowed. Visibility of the administrators was very important to the process.

The location of extracurricular activities was determined by the best location and facilities for the

activity. This allowed for activities to be located in both of the communities where the school facilities were located.

Additional facilitators were the dollars generated by sharing/consolidation, the number of participants in the student athletic programs that helped to maintain the programs, and the increased number and frequency of academic offerings. The current educational programs weren't deleted but were enhanced; educational technology had become more available and accessible by program levels. More core courses were added at the high school to facilitate scheduling for students.

Local Context

The New and the Fine school communities had to adjust and make changes. The students and communities had to accept a new set of rules and the act of working together. Some things had to change; no longer could parents view the Junior/Senior Prom from the viewing balcony because the designated high school didn't have a balcony. The National Honor Society was discontinued and replaced with honors at graduation.

The New district had little vocal opposition to the proposed whole grade sharing plan. The Fine district had a different dilemma; there was a loud opposition group that was led by the local newspaper editor/owner. The school board of the Fine district was united in their support of the measure and worked hard and long to get local support. The opposition did procure the services of an attorney to

block the whole grade sharing effort, until they discovered the cost of the attorney who was dismissed in short order. The opposition wasn't so much against sharing with the community's choice but in doing anything at all. The community had to be convinced by the board members and the administration that there was a declining student enrollment, and that the state mandates were a viable threat to the maintenance of a school within the community. The Fine board stood firm and aided in the dissemination of information gathered by the joint administrative team.

Many meetings were held in each community to distribute information, describe the proposed district sharing concept, and to answer the many questions of the general population. The people in the New community were generally supportive. The crowd in the Fine communities had to be convinced. The Fine constituents thought they were giving up too much because they were losing the high school. One observer stated that the Fine patrons did not see that they were gaining a larger middle school; the old traditions and rivalries were hard to break. Other options for the Fine district couldn't guarantee an attendance center nor a large enough number of students to maintain a long term solution. The shopping, entertainment and trade centers for both communities helped to determine the direction each should take for whole grade sharing.

The administrators stated that the people seemed to be happier with the schools because of what they shared

resources helped provide. The new school community was more cohesive in purpose; no longer did the schools have a survival attitude, it was an attitude of success. The communities have become more like one. A state basketball and golf championship added to the unity of the New Fine district. The former superintendent observed that most of the nay-sayers have come around to supporting the concept of the new district; however, "some holdouts will remain opposed forever."

The elementary principal stated that sharing allowed for smaller elementary classes to be combined with the larger classes of the sharing partner creating well balanced double sections at each grade level. The high school principal opined that the double sections at the high school have allowed greater flexibility in scheduling classes and activities as well as utilizing the staff better. Teachers were given new jobs without moving; this was a rejuvenation for many people. Attrition took care of many of the areas that had more than the needed staff members. When consolidation occurred, there were very few noticeable changes in staffing or building usage as is usually associated with school reorganization.

The district superintendent affirmed that "the [New-Fine] districts wouldn't have gotten to consolidation as easily if they hadn't been into whole grade sharing first." The people of each district had a means of seeing if the partnership could work before making it a final move by

voting on it. One community had to get over the loss of the high school; it had to see that it could still survive. "The whole process went so smoothly, so sudden, yet no changes occurred, because whole grade sharing had taken care of the rough edges. It was time to get the job done."

The respondents agreed that consolidation was accomplished by the whole grade sharing process. The district boards and administration did what they said they would do in the whole grade sharing process. People could trust the school system. The only real transition that occurred from whole grade to consolidation was on paper.

The state established the process, administrative and school board minds had to be made up if the process was going to be accepted. The interviewee's related that there was some fear of loss of control at the local level; the power had to be shared before the people of each district could be comfortable with consolidation. Local control was maintained in the sharing arrangement but was sacrificed in consolidation. During whole grade sharing each district maintained its own board; the consolidated district had only one board that was elected at large from the newly configured district.

It was widely held by the respondents that the superintendency had to be shared; this was seen by the boards as too important a position not to be shared at the time. Two respondents expressed that had the superintendent's position been contested, the disagreement

by the boards of who should fill the position could have killed the whole grade sharing proposal. Cooperation between administrations and school boards caused the transition to happen and the local control issue became less of a problem.

THE PROUD-PROVEN SCHOOL DISTRICT

Background

The Proud-Proven School district was made up of three communities. The communities are thirty miles from any sizable industry or shopping mall. The economic base of the communities is agricultural with a small number of families that commute to other larger communities for their livelihood.

The larger of the three communities had the two school attendance centers, with a K-5 center and the middle school at the former Proud attendance center and a K-5 center and the high school at the former Proven attendance center. Both districts were experiencing a declining enrollment that accelerated during the farm crises of the 1980s. The attendance centers are located nine miles apart.

The high school basketball program was a part of a strong tradition in both communities. Before the districts entered into whole grade sharing, the Proud high school had captured four state basketball championships and as many more state tournament appearances. The Proven district had captured a number of conference basketball championships, but seldom managed to get past the Proud district in state

tournament action. Respondents observed that both communities had tremendous followings to their home and away basketball games.

Since the districts have entered into whole grade sharing and consolidated, they have won one state championship in boys basketball and made numerous appearances at the state level in both boys and girls basketball. The basketball tradition still lives in these two communities as does a strong tradition in academic achievement.

Each school district had its own superintendent and a combined secondary and elementary principal. The superintendent of the Proud district had been in the district for the last 27 years. He was a teacher coach for nine years, six years as the K-12 principal and coach, six years as the Proud superintendent and coach, four years as the shared superintendent of the Proud-Proven whole grade sharing program, and two years as the superintendent of the consolidated Proud-Proven school district. The superintendent of the Proven school district retired when the two districts began the whole grade sharing program in 1989, allowing the two districts to share the services of one jointly employed superintendent.

The high school principal served as the elementary principal in the Proven school building which housed the shared high school of the Proud & Proven district. He had been with the district since they entered into whole grade

sharing as the curriculum director, high school and elementary principal and girls basketball coach. He served as athletic director during that time span. The middle school principal had been with the Proud district and the consolidated district for 16 years as K-12 principal before whole grade sharing and as the middle school and K-5 principal for the Proud building.

Implementation Process

"The first step of the 'Dance' began with the new state standards. Many school districts got scared. There was an uncertainty about small districts being able to meet the new state school standards and surviving." The sharing financial incentives provided by the state had come at the same time as the mandates. The Proud district administration and school board was convinced that it couldn't survive on its own. The Proud district was experiencing a large decline in their student enrollment numbers. The first action occurred when the board at Proud decided to do something because of the decline of student population combined with the pressure of state mandates.

The Proven school district had the same dilemma of a declining enrollment and the added burden of the state mandates. The district had distinguished itself academically with the proven track record of its graduates. However, the state mandates required many more class offerings in the high school, the district needed more student numbers than it had to make the new class offerings financially feasible.

The financial stability of both districts was threatened and the shared incentives provided an answer to their common dilemma. Both school communities saw a need to do something, due to the declining enrollments by combining their student numbers.

Step two was for both districts to visit other neighboring school districts to determine their best options for the long term survival of their schools within their community. Each district board visited with neighboring schools and listened to proposals and possibilities. The Proud district shopped around with other districts, one district "put on the dog," another larger district indicated that there was little hope of maintaining an attendance center at Proud. One respondent observed that "the real question for the Proud district was who could they share with to keep their building open?" The Proven district had visited with their neighboring district to the west. The talks broke off when each district realized they didn't have enough items in common to create a lasting and long term district. The districts were not as compatible as the Proud and Proven merger appeared to be.

The districts had three community meetings of constituents to discuss who the districts should seek as a sharing partner. The district administrations and school boards informed their respective constituents that the districts had to share. The state mandates, declining enrollments, the financial incentives and the stated

Department of Education position were discussed at the meetings. At the third meeting in Proud a straw poll was taken on whom and where the people thought the district should share. Proven was the obvious choice. The choice of Proud for a sharing partner for Proven was determined in a similar process. It was also clear in both communities "from the get-go" that the districts were going to move into re-organization within five years.

The two boards and the superintendents of both districts had approximately five meetings to work out the details dealing with whole grade sharing. The effort resulted in an acceptable contract that was appealing to both communities. It is important to point out that the districts tried to include both districts faculties, students and parents in the contract development process.

The principals' role during the discussions of whole grade sharing was working with the students and the teachers. The principals worked as a liaison with the teachers who had fears of what the change might mean to them; they were concerned with the unknown. Selection of the staff for each building was not as difficult as it might seem. All of the staff had a role to play. Natural attrition and staff movement took care of what might have been problems at that time.

The principals supervised the students who worked together on the common items of interest. The high school principals and the student councils worked out the details

for picking the new school mascot and the new colors. The colors and mascot were chosen by the student body of both schools. They discussed why the districts were chosen for sharing and what the students' role would be for a successful program. Student involvement was very important in working out the surprise elements that could cause problems.

A major hurdle the districts had to overcome was that each district had its own superintendent. The superintendents had served as the district and community spokespersons during the discussion of the whole grade sharing terms and contracts. One respondent stated that the school communities didn't trust the other district's superintendent. The concern was that one person couldn't represent both communities equitably. By having two superintendents the process seemed to be tougher and got bogged down.

The boards decided that one superintendent was a good idea in getting the whole grade sharing process off on the right foot. One respondent observed that "once it was decided that there would be one superintendent, the process went much faster." The superintendent of Proven took early retirement and the Proud superintendent became the shared superintendent of both districts.

The shared superintendent opined that "the process of going from whole grade sharing into reorganization was a three year planned process." The districts used six

committees to collect information about the process and to study the impact of re-organization. The committees made recommendations before the districts petitioned for reorganization. The process included a number of meetings, and the administrations and the boards worked at involving the public. Two respondents stated that at the time, the administration and board members were sick of the many meetings, "so much to do and so many meetings." Looking back, however, the process gave the people a part of the action, and it worked. The administration was, in retrospect, glad to have had the informational meetings. A lot of valuable input was given that helped the districts accomplish an overwhelming consolidation approval rate from both communities. The proposed district had very few vocal opponents to the whole grade sharing or the districts' merger. Those who did oppose the process generally "open enrolled" out of the district.

Legislative Context

One of the interviewees stated that the new state mandates "kicked it all off in the first place." The mandates created a need to take advantage of the sharing and consolidation financial incentives. The interviewees' observed that the new mandates "did not improve education, the mandates forced school districts to look at doing things in name only and not in the reality of what was being done to and for students." The respondents felt that meeting the state standards probably pushed Proud-Proven as much as the

dollar incentives towards whole grade sharing and consolidation.

The incentive dollars from the state were nevertheless important in swaying community support towards whole grade sharing and eventually to consolidation. The shared dollars enabled the sharing districts to meet the financial burden of the mandates. The school district got the maximum dollars from the state that they could by using creative staffing. The dollars the districts could generate by whole grade sharing was a big carrot.

One respondent looked at the importance of the incentives in a different light than did his colleagues. The dollars were seen as much too important in the process. When districts looked at existence financially, the staff sharing to gain dollars was not always a benefit to the students. Sharing didn't always create the best schedule for students; schedules based on sharing of staff did cause problems. He observed that "even with the sharing and consolidation, the district has found itself jumping through hoops and playing the game with the State Department of Education and the legislature."

The legislated time-lines were considered as being beneficial. The time-lines got the districts through the communication process. The time-lines gave the districts direction and more importantly, stopped procrastination. The districts would probably have proceeded the same way as the rules directed regarding how the information process was to

be achieved. Public involvement was also mentioned as a major key to the success of the sharing and consolidation effort.

Barriers and Facilitators

The intense rivalry of athletics between the communities was one problem but in the end did not play a major role in the process. The community of Proud had to deal with the loss of community pride and the loss of the high school. The Proud district had a class of seven seniors in 1988, and class sizes were getting smaller. The district had what it considered to be a viable reason to share with the Proven district. A few community people thought a different direction for sharing was better than the direction chosen by the board and the community. There were few problems in determining the use of the facilities, each facility could only serve a certain purpose. The facility in Proven was more suited as a high school attendance center and the Proud facility was better suited as a middle school center. The respondents agreed that "without the board and administration showing strong positive leadership, there would not have been a successful whole grade sharing and consolidation movement." The districts had good solid boards who trusted each other and worked well together.

Most of the push came from administrators, the board supported the vision, and the timing of all variables of incentives and mandates aided in the effort. There had to be a joint team effort to get all factions involved including

faculty, parents, towns and students. The administration informed the people about the incentive dollars, the declining student population, what the districts and communities could lose, and what they could gain.

Apprehension of staff people was somewhat of a deterrent. Some teachers were barriers to the process; they saw the loss of a niche, the change caused insecurity. Staff concerns about the future were addressed; the mixing of the two district's staffs helped provide security. The districts agreed that there would be no faculty cuts for two years, and that travel time between sites was to be held to a minimum. Being open and not hiding any of the known pitfalls was important to the long range success of the sharing and the consolidation effort.

The district relied on community meetings to inform the public about what was happening. An important issue for example, was the movement of the lower elementary from one community to the other because of small numbers in the kindergarten and first grades. This had to be worked out in an open forum. This was easier because parents with kids in the system were overwhelmingly pleased with the evolving educational system. But much was also due to the students willingness to work things out. The transition to Knights from Panthers/Cyclones was successful due to kid power. Clearly the students accepted and adapted much easier than the faculties or communities.

The administrative team stated that the schools had changed for the better. Academically, the districts had seen advances in the case of technology. They had been able to have a curriculum director. There had been resource enhancement through the purchase of materials and equipment, and combined class numbers had led to better class socialization. The middle school principal thought that the greatest thing to happen was the middle school. The district saw the positive difference it made on middle school kids to be away from the high school kids.

The whole grade sharing process helped the districts ease into reorganization. One respondent stated that "good whole grade sharing helps lead to successful consolidation. If whole grade sharing is a negative experience, consolidation will be tougher." Another respondent expressed that "the whole grade sharing process lessened the pain to the two communities and showed the great benefits that the students were getting from the joint association."

People were told that whole grade sharing would result in consolidation. Trust was developed because the district did what it said it would do. The respondents shared that "the districts couldn't have consolidated as easily if they hadn't been able to share. Sharing helped to get the people to pull together."

Local Context

Many changes occurred in the Proud community. The respondents shared that school pride and spirit has not been

what it was but that the fierce loyalty mentality had lessened. The pride was shared with someone else but still a "blame it on the other community" attitude existed after consolidation. The loss of the high school had caused the one town to feel that they were not as much a part of the success story that they once felt. They felt they would lose more because they did not have a high school. For the Proud community the school was family, the school was the community.

Some residents of the Proud district thought they gave up too much control by being the smaller district. A few patrons who didn't want or like their district's sharing partner, felt they lost out on the local decision making process; it was a trade off to keeping an attendance center open. Many blamed the state for the changes and not the boards. The districts were manipulated and led by the mandates and incentive carrots to do as the state wanted according to respondent accounts of community feelings.

THE CORNWALL-LATER SHARED SCHOOLS

Background

There are four communities located within the whole grade sharing relationship of Cornwall-Later. The district is located in north central Iowa on some of the states most fertile farmland. The two school districts are bordered by much larger districts to the northwest, the southwest and the east. The communities are dependent on the

farm economy for their economic existence. There are a number of families who commute to the neighboring communities for their vocations.

The Cornwall-Later School Districts have had the longest whole grade sharing program in existence in the state of Iowa. The districts began to share the high school and middle school during the 1980-81 academic year. The high school is located in Corn and the middle school is housed in the Later district's school facility. Cornwall has its own elementary located in Wall and Later has its elementary located in the same building with the middle school.

Early documentation of the whole grade sharing plan showed that the process started with looking at other sharing arrangements. Cornwall and Later discussed sharing with three other small rural districts that were located adjacent to the borders of the Cornwall and Later districts. The proposed sharing plan was examined during the mid 1970s, but this effort didn't pan out. One of the districts closed and went to a larger district to the west, another of the original sharing partners joined a newly consolidated district to the east. One of the last potential partners consolidated with a larger district to the south of their district boundaries in 1993. Cornwall-Later had shared their athletic programs in late 1980s with one of the districts until that district joined with another district in a consolidation effort.

The CornWall-Later district had a student population of just over 300 students K-12 who attended the home district. The districts had a sizable number of students (about 100) who attended the parochial school system in one of the neighboring towns. The districts had 40 students who were "open enrolled" out to the surrounding districts with no students open enrolled into the home districts. The total student enrollment for the CornWall-Later district could have been above 400 students.

The distance between the Later school and the Corn school is nine miles, from Corn to Wall is six miles and from Wall to Later is 14 miles. During the 1994/95 school year, the Later district did share one of their elementary grades because of the small student numbers, by sending them to the Wall elementary.

Until recently, the two school districts had shared their superintendent. The shared superintendent concept had served them well until one district felt they had a questionable situation. Each district had their own superintendent for the last four years. The superintendent for the CornWall district was shared with another bordering district and the Later district had its own superintendent who works for the district on a part time basis. The superintendents took care of their respective districts and met together with the other district when they had joint board meetings. The Later district did offer to share the CornWall district's superintendent when their superintendent

left; however, the Cornwall superintendent didn't think he could serve the Cornwall district, the Later district, and the other bordering district.

The Cornwall-Later districts share the services of the elementary and middle school principal. The principal splits the work week between the two facilities and attends the board meetings of both districts and the joint board meetings when they were scheduled. The elementary/middle school principal has been with the district for 6 years. The high school principal served just the Cornwall district at the Corn facility, and also acts as the Activities Director. The current high school principal had just completed his first year as a high school principal. The previous high school principal had served for three years.

The current administrators of the district were not part of the original sharing process. The administrators were aware of the historical process the districts had experienced and were able to supply a rich history of what had happened in the districts since 1980 and why the Cornwall-Later whole grade sharing effort had not resulted in consolidation.

Implementation Process

The sharing proposal had to develop from a common philosophical base and had to look at the compatibility of community cultures. The Cornwall and Later districts started their sharing effort by having many meetings. The districts had some rough going at the start when they were

trying to determine who was in charge of what. One respondent shared that "once the locations and who was in charge of what was established, the whole grade sharing progressed smoothly."

The original sharing agreement took care of any problems regarding placement of staff. The three attendance centers of Cornwall-Later were planned during the late 70's with the first year of whole grade sharing occurring in 1980/81. Each district was exclusively responsible for its own operation of the grades it was responsible for and had its own district policies and financial identity. Each district still had their own graduation class composite. Each district had its own set of district records and student class lists. The whole grade sharing effort was accomplished together, yet separately.

Legislative Context

The state mandates and the sharing incentives came after the Cornwall-Later districts entered into their whole grade sharing agreement. The school districts were able to benefit from the financial incentives for whole grade sharing over the years and the revenue generated helped to create the district's impressive fund balances. The incentives helped the Cornwall-Later districts to meet the new state standards.

The elementary principal stated that "the districts believed that they were doing a fine job of educating as they were." The administrators expressed that "the effort to

reorganize into one district wasn't worth the possible student losses." The districts could have pursued consolidation, but chose not to do it. The financial needs of the districts did not override the risk of consolidation, which could result in a loss of students via open enrollment and property loss.

Barriers and Facilitators

One respondent, who has been involved with other sharing programs, observed that "the biggest reason other whole grade sharing experiences have failed has been a lack of common philosophies." Sharing districts need philosophical compatibility, for example, that the kids and education need to be first. The pursuit of the sharing or consolidation incentives should not be the focus. In the Cornwall-Later sharing concept, there had not been a desire to consolidate, nor did the districts feel that small school or class size was a reason to consolidate. These districts had an intentional lack of communication regarding the subject of consolidation.

The information processes had been important to the success of the sharing program. The boards and the administration had to be up front with the people concerning school related issues. The districts had been provided with publications that presented all of the known material. The district boards and administration informed the people how it was going to be. At Cornwall-Later all activities were

shared at a 60% to 40% rate. This had stood the test of time.

The high school principal noted that "things have been different in the whole grade sharing effort of Cornwall-Later; whole grade sharing does not need to lead into reorganization as it has elsewhere." People don't want to talk about it openly; it is not a good topic for conversation. One of the interviewee's stated that "one never hears of any official consolidation talk from board members or the community."

A few years ago, the Cornwall and Later districts shared a superintendent, an arrangement that didn't work out. One respondent observed that "the separate superintendents has created an obstacle to doing anything different." Another respondent noted "some of the current board members have been long term, they have been here since the original sharing agreement in 1980/81. Consolidation was a touchy subject with them. The boards don't want to pursue the topic of consolidation; without board support, consolidation was a moot issue."

The district was not worried about open enrollment due to the educational opportunities provided by the shared district. However, there was fear of what consolidation might do to the proposed districts financial ability to provide for quality education. More people would be inclined to leave the district if it did consolidate then if it maintained its current arrangement. The elementary principal

stated that "some people have looked for a more stable district because of size, but not for a better education."

The administration had a lot to do with setting the district's direction. The administration and the board knew what the community wanted, and if it was felt that consolidation was necessary, the board and administration would have directed the district to that end. The parents didn't want consolidation according to one administrator; rather "they want to stay as we, the districts, currently are."

The Cornwall-Later districts didn't want to lose their equal status on the board but under consolidation, one district would have less representation. This balance of representation had been an important feature of the sharing arrangement. The respondents felt that the Cornwall-Later districts would go on as they were for some time until the money runs out. The current sharing program would then split or dissolve before reorganization occurred. Each district had plentiful resources and neither would have benefited from the reorganization dollars.

Local Context

The communities have been willing to support the current school. The districts have low levy rates, and by working together, the districts are efficient. One elementary class was shared with Wall from Later because of the small size. The parents of the children in the shared

elementary class made the decision themselves with assistance from the principal.

At CornWall-Later, if you asked for a technology item or supplies, you got it. CornWall-Later patrons were very proud of the computer technology that was located in all of the buildings, especially the middle school and the high school. The district belief was that elementary education doesn't need technology to be good, technology just enhances the process.

Each district has taken care of their own obligations. The districts provided for separate but equal opportunities, separate district and student records. All paper work was duplicated for each student and records of who belongs to who were kept. There was no CornWall-Later class composite, each district had their own graduating class. Respondents observed that "the whole grade sharing process worked in CornWall-Later because each district was allowed to take care of their own responsibility; the high school was the function of CornWall, and the middle school was the function of Later."

The elementary principal observed that "these districts were known for quality music and fine arts programs. More emphasis was on academics and not on winning." People watched the kids play even if they lost; it's a community thing. "Academically, the CornWall-Later districts have done it as well as any." Both districts are very solid financially. Later has a carry over balance at the end of

the fiscal year of over \$350,000. Cornwall has a carry over balance of \$600,000 plus.

The respondents concluded that "the outlook for the Cornwall-Later school districts to consolidate doesn't seem possible; a consolidation vote would not pass."

Reorganization was looked at eight years ago with east and west neighbors. Nothing has come of it as yet. The financial incentives to consolidate have expired, so they are not an issue. This was a case of "purposeful non-consolidation; the districts will stay as they are until attrition takes over."

Each school board had been very protective of its own turf and the people knew that. They wanted it that way. The view was that the districts' sharing program would lose if they tried to consolidate. One respondent observed that "the communities that make up Cornwall-Later don't mix with each other between elementary sites; they did mix at the high school(Corn)." If the districts decided to consolidate, there would be few changes, other than student numbers, due to those changes done because of whole grade sharing. The only animosity that was expressed by the respondents to the current sharing setup was that some residents of Later felt they have given up more in the current arrangement because they gave up the high school.

A respondent opined that the school community sentiment is that "once a community has experienced a good but small elementary, they have no desire to get bigger. It doesn't make sense." The Cornwall-Later districts are proud of what

they do. The board and administration represent the people they live with and work for. The administrators added that "the districts have not sat around waiting for things to happen." The districts have followed the rules rigidly but still worked to benefit the student. The districts have been able to hire people who care about kids.

Each district in CornWall-Later has liked having control over its own destiny. Each district could do its thing. There was a feeling of one district helping the other, trust, but neither district could survive without the other district working with them.

THE SANDPOINT AND TOURVILLE SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Background

The communities of Sandpoint and Tourville are rural communities in west central Iowa. The communities lie on the southern edge of the last great glacial movement through the Midwest part of the North American continent. The land lies very flat in the north and eastern parts of the district and the southern and western parts are comprised of rolling hills. The district is split between the Mississippi River and the Missouri River watersheds by a high ridge land formation.

The Tourville school district encompasses two communities that had consolidated their school districts in the 1970s, with each community having an attendance center. The Tourville district had two distinct economic bases,

agriculture and tourism. One of the communities has a large shallow lake that is the focal point of many recreational activities within the community. The Sandpoint community is mostly agricultural with some very light manufacturing and many sand/gravel pits.

The two districts had their own K-12 systems. However, the districts did share vocational classes before they began the whole grade sharing concept. Students were bused back and forth to take advantage of the class offerings. Busses were running between the two high schools on an hourly basis. The schools were able to offer a variety of vocational classes and beginning college classes with this arrangement.

The Sandpoint and Tourville districts started a five year sharing agreement in 1991 with the high school being located in Tourville and the middle school being located in Sandpoint. Each district retained its own elementary for the first two years of whole grade sharing. The districts included the elementary grades in the whole grade sharing process in 1993, and in the process, closed one of the attendance centers of the Tourville district. The whole grade sharing project involving the middle school and the high school has been relatively smooth, however, the elementary sharing has not received the same kind of support, according to the respondents.

The districts began to share their superintendent during the first year of whole grade sharing; the

superintendent at the time was under contract with the Sandpoint district for one year prior to sharing of the position. The districts also shared the high school principal of Tourville who had been with that district for three years. The shared middle school principal was with the Sandpoint district for 20 years. The elementary principals were kept separate until the schools were joined in 1993. The Tourville elementary principal became the shared elementary principal for both districts in 1993.

The interviewees stated that the turmoil over the elementary sharing has caused a rift in the sharing program. The districts ended the shared elementary principal agreement in the spring of 1994 and the Sandpoint district hired its own elementary principal. During the summer of 1994 the shared superintendent of four years left the district and a new one was hired.

Implementation Process-Sharing

The beginning of district sharing for the Sandpoint and Tourville districts opened with several meetings with the parents of the students of the two districts. The two districts appointed people who were felt to be objective about the task to fill a variety of committee positions. The districts appointed a transportation committee, a facility committee, and an academic advisory group. Each committee looked at different aspects of the area they were charged with. The committees set their own meeting schedules

and at the conclusion of a set time period a large meeting with all groups was held.

The chairs of each committee presented the findings and recommendations of the committee to the joint boards of the two districts. The process took one year to conclude. The districts had shared many high school classes, college classes and vocational classes on a shuttle shared system prior to the whole grade sharing agreement. The Tourville and Sandpoint districts had already been sharing athletics for one year prior to the whole grade sharing agreement. The board took the committee and administrative recommendations into consideration in determining what teachers would be assigned what academic areas. The process created a blending of staff people from each district. The agreement was signed in January of 1991.

Different aspects of the whole grade sharing were well organized. All topics were examined, nothing was left to chance. The districts had separate superintendents at the time of the planning. The districts used the same attorney to make sure the process was in line with state code. The two districts' administrations and boards met in an ad hoc capacity. The administrative team had constant contact with the process; the team met regularly. Any new information was passed on to the committees, the school boards and to the communities.

The district administrators and committee members researched the various aspects of the new school

organization, particularly the middle school concept. Preparations were made to move the necessary classroom equipment and supplies before the move was accomplished. The movement of educational materials and furniture was done on the last day of school. Community volunteers and students were used to accomplish the task. One individual reported that "the move turned out to be a well planned operation."

According to the respondents, the districts' approach to the elementary whole grade sharing was not treated in the same manner as the middle school and high school whole grade sharing effort. There was little support for the elementary sharing. There was no involvement or support from staff or community in the planning or development of elementary sharing.

The district boards decided to share the elementary schools even though one respondent stated that "the one school district was not ready for elementary sharing." Another respondent concluded that "the driving force for the elementary sharing was the financial incentives. However, the action was too late to get all of the carrot". Despite the fact that school board meetings had opposition to the proposal, the elementary sharing was "rammed down the throats of the people."

Consolidation

In the spring of 1994 the district boards decided that the time was right to start the consolidation process. The board handled the process by appointing a committee of three

people from each district who drew up the consolidation petition. The committee members met with the districts' lawyer who assisted in drawing up the consolidation petitions. Everything appeared to go well. Because of distances between district facilities "the consolidation was a natural, the Tourville and Sandpoint districts should do it." A survey conducted in the 1950's had stated the same conclusion.

The Sandpoint district had a difficult time getting enough signatures for the petition. Some of the problems the organizers experienced was that the petitions and the signature sheets were not put together. The shared superintendent had to set deadlines to get things done in a timely fashion. The Tourville district had an easy time getting things done, the petition filled up easily with signatures to spare. The districts filed the respective district petitions and the district consolidation hearings were held.

The reorganization hearings were uneventful and the process seemed to be positive. The week before the vote, some anti-consolidation sentiment was published in the local papers. The sudden appearance of the no-vote group gave little time for the pro-vote group to respond to the items in the newspapers. The vote was held in February of 1995, and passed easily in the Tourville district, but failed by a handful of votes in the Sandpoint district. A new

consolidation effort has begun in the district with a vote scheduled to take place in November, 1995.

Legislative Context

The state's financial incentives were an inducement for the Tourville and Sandpoint districts to whole grade share. The districts were able save dollars and student time by cutting down on the inter district busing of the previous shuttle sharing arrangement. The dollars were a big factor in the decision making process. The respondents concluded that "everything that was handed down from the state, mandates and financial incentives, had impact." One respondent added that "without the financial incentives, Sandpoint would never have considered whole grade sharing."

One respondent stated that "there was fear that the districts alone didn't have the number of students for a safe school size." The middle school principal observed that the junior high was the biggest beneficiary of the whole grade sharing process; the middle school and the high school have been located in separate facilities. The high school principal felt that the main effect that whole grade sharing had on the high school was that the larger number of high school students helped to provide scheduling flexibility. However, a larger number of high school curricular offerings was not an outcome as expected.

The state statutes and time lines were definitely helpful. School districts needed to have a process that was well planned. One respondent opined that "the districts

would have benefitted and all would have progressed well if the time line plan had been followed for the elementary sharing." If this had been done, he concluded, "then maybe the consolidation problems wouldn't have been such a barrier." The time lines helped by providing an outline. The districts followed the time lines the first time around by the book to avoid pitfalls. The district boards and administrations didn't want the initial whole grade sharing to come undone by procedural error.

Barriers and Facilitators-Sharing

The first year the Tourville and Sandpoint districts shared the athletic teams, they were successful. The team successes helped to draw the communities together.

The short distance between the schools and communities was a big help towards getting a whole grade sharing agreement. The process of where to locate the high school was a big issue. The committees and the district used three architects who helped determine the best site for the high school and the middle school.

There have been many questions about why the districts should have changed at all. There was some resistance in the Sandpoint district because of losing the high school in the sharing process. One of the respondents felt that some people refused to accept the sharing and the consolidation. Personal feelings have entered into the process. A few patrons who don't want to give up local control resisted any change.

A major barrier that was seen by three of the respondents was the district philosophy at the elementary level. The Tourville district was a very hands on district; they had used the text as a reference. The Sandpoint district used the texts with little hands on. One district was more basal oriented and the other was true to the whole language approach. Multiple class sections caused some differences; one district was used to the differences and the other district was not. One of the shared administrators stated that "one district was more attuned to teachers being right and the other district was more likely to question a teacher."

The philosophical difference was not apparent until the districts brought the elementary schools together. The elementary sharing occurred after the initial sharing agreement was already underway. The different educational philosophies at the elementary were thrown together. There was misinformation, a lack of information, and a public relations problem. The shared elementary has resulted in a backlash of public support. The two different elementary cultures have not been compatible.

Splits within the communities became more apparent as whole grade sharing worked and the districts progressed towards consolidation. One respondent observed that "whole grade sharing can last too long, people have become content and don't want more change." The ability to compromise about

what the districts have been doing becomes less likely to occur as time passed.

Consolidation

The barriers of power and local control have been a problem according to the respondents. The Sandpoint district had chosen not to validate the State's reorganization incentives four years prior to the consolidation vote; therefore, there was not a consolidation incentive available to the districts if they did consolidate. The Tourville district felt that consolidation was inevitable, but not the Sandpoint district.

The Sandpoint district had wanted to delay the consolidation petition and the vote until administrator contracts were decided for 1995/6. Consolidation had become a personnel issue for some patrons, it was not an issue of reorganization.

The composition of the transition school board had become an issue. How people were going to be put on the interim board became another issue. The no-vote people wanted the transition board to be elected at large by the new district. The makeup of the permanent board became an equity issue between the communities. The respondents felt that trust for the Tourville board members was an issue for the Sandpoint voters.

One respondent identified the issue of local control in this way, "It is the #1 issue, there is a perception of loose cannons on one school board by the other district.

Some moves have been interesting. There is a lack of the element of trust due to school board member machinations. The one district worries about the power of the loose cannon."

The perception of local control has been a very integral part of the process. One respondent observed that "it has affected the failed February consolidation election." He elaborated that the Sandpoint district was a very proud community. First, the high school goes, then everything else will be lost because of the loss of local control. "Sandpoint had their own system, they have been used to having it their way. The district doesn't want to lose that local control."

Local Control

The communities themselves haven't changed much. Those who have been opposed to the whole grade sharing are still bitter, they have felt a loss of the high school in Sandpoint. One respondent observed that because the joint school district was bigger, the districts lost some people who used to attend school functions. The people lost personal interest in the district. He observed that "people just don't want to be in the other district's turf." These districts have too many traditional and philosophical differences. Another response was that "there are those who see them as separate identities, a larger vs. smaller school rub." Many of those who want to find fault with the current system, including teachers, think that the way things used

to be has gone down hill since sharing began. The Sandpoint community has become concerned about losing their attendance center in the future.

There has been a change in the attitude about the no vote. Tourville has become combative about consolidation, the issue is no longer taken for granted. The kids in the two districts, however, are closer than before the vote. After the vote failed, more communication has been occurring in each community. One underlying benefit for the two districts has been better communication. One respondent stated that "there is a lot more intense interest about what is happening in school since the failed reorganization vote, more examination. A lot more gossip also." The respondents predicted that voter approval in Tourville will likely decrease but still have a healthy positive margin. Passage of the consolidation vote in Sandpoint was possible with some changes in the petition language. If the representation of the new district board has been addressed, the vote swing will occur.

The respondents felt that there will be very few changes in the school district operations. Whole grade sharing has taken care of most staff placements, natural attrition has been a helpful aspect in handling staff reduction matters. The districts have two board secretaries, two transportation directors, two administrative offices. Consolidation would have reduced the positions to one. Consolidation would have resulted in the two master

contracts becoming one master contract, the current district policies, although similar, would have become one set of policies. Some of the concerns involved which bank would have handled the bank account. The principals stated that the middle school has seen its major transition and the high school curriculum schedule will be about the same.

Summary of Findings

Table II represents a graphic depiction of the sentiment found among the respondents for each of the shared programs and for those districts that have pursued the consolidation activities. Factors associated with state policies are placed first, followed by an array of local factors described by many interviewees as influencing decisions to whole grade share and, in four cases, to consolidate.

The summaries are a compilation of the administrators from the districts involved in the research project. Differences that were pronounced between administrators of the same district or combination of districts are noted in the notes below the table. The districts labeled New and Fn have consolidated, so have districts labeled Prd and Prvn. The districts labeled CW and Ltr seem to have no intention of consolidating and the districts labeled Sdpt and Trvl have had one failed consolidation vote and another vote set for some time in the future.

Table 2

Factors Supporting/Not Supporting Change

	New	Fn	Prd	Prvn	CW	Ltr	Sdpt	Trvl
State Policies:								
State Standards/Mandates	+	+	+	+	-	-	+	+
Dollar incentives/WGS	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	+
Dollar incentives/Cons.	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	+
Processes/Timelines	+	+	+	+	0	0	+	+
Local Control Issues:								
Satisfaction with Status	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	+
Loss of the High School	+	-	-	+	+	-	-	+
Community Pride	+	+	-	+	+	+	-	+
Declining Enrollment	+	+	+	+	-	-	+	+
Quality of Ed. Program	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-
Community Trust/Bond	+	+	+	+	0	0	-	-
Local Control	+	-	-	+	-	-	-	+
District Philosophy	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-
Athletic Sharing	+	+	+	+	0	0	+	+
Facilities an Asset	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+
Courtship of Partner	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Need to Do Something	+	+	+	+	0	0	+	+
Distance Between Centers	+	+	+	+	0	0	+	+
Shared Superintendent	+	+	+	+	-	-	0	0

New: New School District

Fn: Fine School District

Prd: Proud School District

Prvn: Proven School District

CW: CornWall Sch. District

Ltr: Later School District

Sdpt: Sandpoint Sch. Dist.

Trvl: Tourville Sch. District

+: A factor that was supportive of change, moving to whole grade sharing and/or to consolidation, a sense of urgency existed

-: A factor that demonstrated satisfaction with the current arrangement, no change foreseen, no sense of urgency.

0: A factor not of a concern for the district or its sharing partner, not an influence either way.

Many elements were brought out by the participants during the interview process. In most cases, the same elements were mentioned by all or the majority of the administrators within the same shared school districts. Many items were common to all four shared districts; however, they were not always viewed in the same context. The table

represents both the similar and the diverse points of view or experiences of the districts involved.

The left column provides a brief description of forces for or against change towards whole grade sharing and/or consolidation. The remaining columns represent the separate district's position regarding the factors on the left. The items were marked as: -(minus) being satisfied with the current situation and not a factor propelling change, a lack of urgency, + (plus) indicates being supportive of change towards whole grade sharing and/or towards consolidation with a feeling of urgency. And the last category of identification, 0 (zero) means that the item was not of concern to the district.

State Policy Influence

The state mandates created both a financial and a survival concern on the part of boards and administrators that pushed school districts into whole grade sharing arrangements. One administrator observed that "it took the mandates to move districts to do something, even as bad as they were and as gutted as they are now." The sharing/consolidation movement in Iowa was promoted at the state level, as it has been historically according to Haller's observations(1992). The impetus for the restructuring that occurred in Iowa was from outside of the smaller districts, primarily from the Iowa Legislature,

special interest groups, and the Iowa Department of Education (Department of Education, Iowa, 1993).

The number of shared programs and consolidations in Iowa at that time indicated the effectiveness of the carrot/mandates approach. If legislators wanted schools to reorganize in a positive way, they had to provide an incentive. Whole grade sharing had become a permanent process; once a school entered into whole grade sharing it was hard to undo, though it didn't necessarily lead to consolidation. Berliner observed that sharing either leads to consolidation or it enables districts to preserve local schools without sacrificing educational equity (1990).

Those administrators who experienced the sharing to consolidation activity stated that the process to get to whole grade sharing and then to consolidation was a good one. The process should be maintained with some modifications that were somewhat specific to the individual circumstances. The administrators in the Tourville Sandpoint sharing program stated that the time lines should be shorter between whole grade sharing and consolidation.

The participants from Proud-Proven and New-Fine stated that the consolidation process was much easier to accomplish with whole grade sharing occurring first. Many of the problems associated with school consolidation could be taken care of via the state inspired whole grade sharing process. "Whole grade sharing to consolidation is the way to go. It

has gone as well as could be expected, the process shouldn't be changed."

A consideration to future actions by rule makers and policy developers was this admonition given by the respondent who felt too much emphasis was given to the financial incentives during the sharing, but too little consideration as to what will happen after sharing or consolidation. "There needs to be a process to address the loss of the sharing and consolidation incentives when they run out. It would be nice to have a formulae to give financial need to groups who go through the whole grade sharing process instead of just sharing personnel." The concern is significant when the observation about the lasting effect of economies of scale are not clear when schools are made larger (Rincones, 1988; Ornstein, 1993; Haller, 1992; Sher, 1988).

The recommendations from the respondents to the rule makers are that the laws are fine as encouragement, but consolidation should not be a mandate. Legislatures should let small and large districts decide their own destiny for themselves. The sentiment is supported by Rogers' position that school consolidation should not be used to reduce the number of schools, but as an option for locales to decide (1987).

The financial incentive for whole grade sharing was a big incentive that moved schools into the sharing process. To get the job done the incentive dollars had to be a part

of the new state mandates. Traditionally, rural and small schools have been the target of school consolidations (DeYoung & Howley, 1992), and the financial incentives were directed to the small school districts of Iowa. "The carrot was pretty good sized; however, it shouldn't be the reason schools whole grade share or consolidate." The reason for school districts to come together should be what is best for the kids which one observer stated "took a back seat in the process for Sandpoint and Tourville."

The consolidation incentives propelled four of the eight school districts that shared activities to consolidation. However, they were not able to influence the Sandpoint-Tourville and the Cornwall-Later districts to consolidate. Other considerations were more important than rushing into the incentives, the respondents from those shared programs stated that the loss of local control was too great an issue to be overcome in the four districts.

Also, there was a distinct difference of school philosophy between the Sandpoint and the Tourville districts and communities. These two issues alone precluded the financial incentives for consolidation from making a difference in the Sandpoint and Tourville districts.

State Standards/Mandates: The New-Fine, Proud-Proven, and Sandpoint-Tourville districts reacted to the new state standards and mandates by forming whole grade sharing partnerships. For the Proud-Proven and New-Fine districts the state policies eventually led to school district

consolidation. The state standards had little or no effect on the CornWall-Later system; however, they were able to maintain their program because of their prior whole grade sharing. The Sandpoint-Tourville district underwent the whole grade sharing routine more because of a fear of losing the district's flexibility to decide its own destiny as a result of the state mandates. State funding was an encouragement for the sharing process (Brackenbury et al., 1990).

Dollar Incentives/Whole Grade Sharing: The incentives for whole grade sharing were important to the selling of the concept in Proud-Proven, New-Fine, and Tourville. However, it was not the important issue for CornWall-Later who had begun whole grade sharing before the incentives were available, or the Sandpoint district who had a sizable unspent balance to work with.

Dollar Incentives/Consolidation: The Proud-Proven and New-Fine districts did what they could to maximize the amount of whole grade sharing and consolidation dollars they received by buying into the whole process. The CornWall-Later district was not moved to action to obtain the consolidation incentive. The Sandpoint-Tourville districts were split in their desire to take advantage of the incentive, it was more important to Tourville than it was to Sandpoint. All of the districts noted the advantage of having the available consolidation dollars but also noted

the cost of consolidation, which is not a cheap endeavor (Hallanan, 1992).

Processes/Timelines: The Sandpoint-Tourville, New-Fine and Proud-Proven districts indicated that the state policies and time lines that districts had to follow to get to a whole grade sharing agreement were helpful and assisted in the process. In the CornWall-Later district, these items were a moot issue because the time lines were initiated after the CornWall-Later sharing agreement was put into action. The loss of the financial incentives was established become involved with the process (Ornstein, 1993).

Local Contextual Influences

The local school districts had to deal with many issues that were unique to their situations. School districts differed in many ways, from the availability of resources to distinct demographics of location, the economic status of the student population and the size of the student body (Goldman et al., 1990). Another distinction was the shared/non-shared view of each district's participants as to the need to do something at the local level.

The administrators have offered advice to those districts and administrators who might want to try the whole grade and /or consolidation process:

1. School boards have to be sold on the process.
2. The district administrations have to work together, they must all be open and honest.
3. All agenda's have to be up front and in the open, boards and administrators shouldn't try to

hide the real issues for what a district should be doing.

4. Administrators and boards must present the facts to their public clearly and concisely.
5. The process should let the appropriate citizens deal with topics that are pertinent to them.

Satisfaction with Status: The New-Fine, Proud-Proven districts were supportive of change partly because they were not satisfied with the status quo as separate districts or with the whole grade sharing arrangement. The Cornwall-Later districts, on the other hand, were satisfied with the sharing arrangement and saw no need for further change. The Sandpoint district was more content with the whole grade sharing arrangement than was the Tourville district where more urgency to do something existed. Each shared arrangement did experience the benefits of working with each other in a cooperative relationship (Brackenbury et al., 1990). Four districts saw that further cooperation could be achieved through consolidation; the other four districts did not choose the same route.

Loss of the High School: The loss of the high school in a sharing or consolidation effort can be a contentious effort (Decker & Talbot, 1989). The loss of the high school was more of a concern for the school districts that did lose the high school than it was for those districts who lost the middle schools. The level of concern was higher in the Sandpoint district and had more far reaching complications than it did in the Proud-Proven and New-Fine districts. The loss of the high school in the Later district has not

affected the whole grade sharing activity in the Cornwall-Later program.

Community Pride: The state basketball and golf championships helped to solidify the New-Fine programs and communities' faith in the new school district. The Proud district lost the strong school following they had before the sharing program even though they had a state basketball championship and were contenders in both boys and girls basketball during sharing and consolidation phases. The Cornwall-Later sharing had been ongoing for so long that the community support for the school was very strong; this was evident in their willingness to maintain the status quo. Sharing has allowed small and rural schools to benefit and retain their identity (Berliner, 1990).

However, the loss of community pride has been more pronounced in the Sandpoint district than in the Tourville district. Loss of community pride seems to occur more in the community that lost the high school than the community that had retained the high school.

Declining Enrollment: The Proud-Proven, New-Fine, and Sandpoint-Tourville districts were concerned about the declining enrollment they experienced in the mid 1980s. This element coupled with the state standards and the incentives, prompted action on their part. Consolidation had become a solution for schools that experienced a decline in student enrollments (Berliner, 1990). The Cornwall-Later district had experienced the same student decline; however, their

numbers were up since the mid 1980's. The position of the Cornwall-Later district was that future declining enrollment would cause the district to dissolve before it consolidated.

Quality of Education Program: The Proud-Proven, New-Fine, and Cornwall-Later districts saw that they could and did improve the educational program for their students by combining their student bodies, by sharing resources, and most importantly, by receiving the financial incentives offered through whole grade sharing. The Sandpoint-Tourville district did not realize an improvement in the high school curriculum offerings by combining the high school student bodies or programs. The areas that the Sandpoint-Tourville district administrators did see some improvement was in the ability to separate the high school and the middle school and the scheduling flexibility they gained by putting the two high schools together. School consolidation is no guarantee to a better schooling experience (Sybouts & Bartling, 1988).

Community Trust/Bond: The Proud-Proven and New-Fine districts saw that trust building between communities and schools was a must for successful sharing and consolidation. The trust element is seen as very important for the success of the district's long term survival (Brackenbury et al., 1990). In the S-T districts, the lack of trust between communities and boards had become a roadblock to consolidation. Manipulation and co-option increased the level of conflict between sharing partners (Brodsky &

Masciandaro, 1992). In the CW-L program each board did its own thing within its district, a trust to do the right thing existed between districts, but it has not caused any further change beyond sharing.

Local Control: The Proud-Proven, New-Fine, and Sandpoint-Tourville districts indicated that the loss of local control was not as important a factor to the larger community or the community that had the high school, which was the larger community. The smaller community had more concern with the loss of local control because through consolidation the smaller community would have less representation on the school board. In the CornWall-Later district, local control had been a large issue with neither community willing to give up what they perceived as equal status.

District Philosophy: The administrators of districts stated that similar school philosophies helped school districts to work together. The Proud-Proven, New-Fine, and CornWall-Later districts felt they had similar philosophies that helped them to have successful programs and relations. There was a consensus in the Sandpoint-Tourville districts that the elementary philosophies were different enough to cause the district problems in getting to consolidation. The philosophical difference helped to create mistrust on the boards and between communities.

Athletic Sharing: The Proud-Proven, New-Fine and Sandpoint-Tourville districts indicated that athletic

sharing was a positive aspect towards whole grade sharing acceptance. The New-Fine and Sandpoint-Tourville districts shared athletics before they entered whole grade sharing. The CW-L district saw athletic sharing as a positive part of whole grade sharing along with the academics.

Facilities as an Asset: The CornWall-Later, Proud-Proven and New-Fine districts were able to determine with some ease which facility was the most appropriate for the location of the high school. In the Sandpoint-Tourville district, there were considerable differences between the communities as to where the high school should be located because of facility similarities. The district used three architectural firms to help the committees determine the location of the high school and middle school.

Courtship of Partner: All of the districts had explored other sharing possibilities before the current arrangements were settled on by the school boards. Each district had to satisfy particular items that were important to them. For Fine, it was compatibility and common interests with the New district. For Proud, it was the ability to maintain their attendance center in a program with Proven. For Later and CornWall, it was being able to maintain local control or independence while working together. In the case of Sandpoint and Tourville, it was the location and the "natural" aspect of these two districts working together.

Need to do Something: All of the districts had an urgency to do something. Each district recognized that doing

nothing was not in their best interest. They recognized that outside influences created a situation that called for some kind of action (Greenfield, 1986; Briggs & Lawton, 1989). However, what happened after the first round of sharing activity was what separated these districts' experiences. Proud-Proven and New-Fine have gone further by consolidating, Cornwall-Later has not attempted to consolidate and Sandpoint-Tourville made one attempt to consolidate that failed.

Distance Between Centers: Distance was not seen as major consideration in Cornwall-Later. In the other arrangements of Proud-Proven and New-Fine, distance was discussed and used as a comparison to other sharing alternatives. In the case of Sandpoint-Tourville, it was one of the most important aspects of the district's motivation to share.

Shared Superintendent: The shared superintendent helped to reduce the administrative costs in the districts (Berliner, 1990); however, the concept was not without its own shortcomings. The implementation of a shared superintendent was seen as a necessity in the Proud-Proven and the New-Fine whole grade sharing and consolidation endeavors. In the Cornwall and Later experience, it was supported at one time, then abandoned, and then reconsidered. Its importance was dependent on the personality filling the position of superintendent.

The Sandpoint and Tourville experience of the shared superintendent was not given much mention other than the fact that the superintendent who was shared during the original whole grade sharing phase was gone and that this might have had a slight negative impact.

Summary

In short, both state policy and local contextual factors were very influential in moving districts to at least some change. It was evident, however, that state policy was a necessary but not sufficient factor in the change to consolidation, as only four of the eight districts took the change process to this conclusion. Local negative contextual factors were highly influential, even under the stress of a locally recognized need to do something, and even with state policy mandates and incentives. Such policy, it seems, can be important in inducing change, but needs to recognize its own limitations in bringing about changes in how education is governed in the state of Iowa.

Four of the districts worked themselves into a new system of whole grade sharing, which for them became the new status quo, a situation one sharing pair has maintained for fifteen years. The other four districts saw a need to go further and establish a new status for their districts through consolidation.

State policy on incentives had impact on whole grade sharing, but less so on consolidation due to local control issues. Whole grade sharing was seen as an easier endeavor

than was the next step to consolidation. A major reason for this observation could be that the whole grade sharing decision was a school board function, and the consolidation issue was decided by the voters of the school districts involved.

Chapter 4

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS and RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of the study was to add to the knowledge of the effectiveness of state policy making that intends to get school districts to consolidate. In the instance of whole grade sharing and the school consolidation that resulted because of sharing, the policies of the Iowa Legislature worked towards getting some small rural schools to whole grade share, to share other resources, and to eventually consolidate. The state policies were implemented differently in the four whole grade sharing cases that were used in the study. In two cases whole grade sharing led to consolidation, in one case consolidation was left pending and in the fourth case consolidation was not a consideration.

Four whole grade sharing activities were used for the basis of the study. The four whole grade sharing arrangements represented eight different school districts in the rural northern part of Iowa. The school districts represented communities that were economically reliant upon agricultural activities for their existence. The communities were not what would be considered racially or ethnically diversified. Many of the interests of the different communities were common to each other. One main common interest in each of the communities was that they be able to keep their school open and as an active part of the community.

The problem of this study was to examine the implementation of a state policy that encouraged small rural school districts to share grades and to consolidate. The research effort described the experiences of four whole grade sharing activities. Specific areas of state policies/mandates and local control/context issues were explored. The intent was to determine the impact of the implementation of state mandates in regard to the local control issues of the local communities and school districts.

The data was gathered from the use of an established set of questions that were based upon the literature review and a sample set of questions administered to administrators of shared and consolidated districts. The respondents were the current school superintendents and building principals of the specific districts involved in the study. The information was recorded in notes and on a tape recorder in all but one case, for cross checking the accuracy of the records. In one instance the respondent felt more comfortable in speaking if not being recorded, therefore a heavier reliance on the note taking process was required.

The findings were arranged in a table to enable the researcher to draw comparisons of the responses of the respondents to the research questionnaire. The responses were categorized as being a factor of change, a factor of district satisfaction or a factor that was not of a particular influence to do anything within the district.

The study found that mandates from state agency levels do make a difference on how a school district may plan, but not always in the manner that the state agency may desire. Inducements from the state level can influence how school districts react to state mandates, but not every school district will respond in the same manner. Local conditions within school districts will influence how the local districts will respond to state initiatives. Community traditions, concern for educational quality, district financial health, district facilities and state efforts can combine to produce outcomes that are desired by the state and outcomes that defy state desires.

Conclusions

Six conclusions of this study were drawn:

1. Mandates matter. But not always. State standards were promulgated by the state legislature. The mandates put pressure on local school districts financially to meet the mandates. Many districts chose to work with their neighbors to meet the state standards.
2. Inducements can be effective, but not everyone likes carrots. The sharing and consolidation dollars enabled school districts to meet the financial burden of state standards by sharing resources and students. Some districts chose to share and to pick up the additional dollar inducements by consolidating. Other districts only picked up the sharing option and chose not to take advantage of the consolidation "carrot". Different reasons exist for the

reluctance or acceptance of state provided inducements. This needs to be recognized by state policy makers if local districts are allowed to decide whether to take advantage of state offerings.

3. Mandates and inducements may have an interactive effect larger than each separately. The inducements were available to Iowa school districts two years prior to the introduction of the state standards and four years prior to the implementation of the new state standards. The flurry of school sharing increased as the state standards implementation requirements grew closer. It appears that based on numbers, the state standards had limited effect on school districts to whole grade share to take advantage of the inducements offered for sharing, and that the consolidation inducement became attractive to many but not all whole grade sharing districts. The two state inducements of mandates and financial incentives appeared to be more effective when each built upon the other, but not always.

4. Local conditions may inhibit state policy. Community values (i.e. traditions, trust, pride and local control) may counter and even nullify state efforts of mandates and inducements.

5. When state and local interests coincide, state policy is a done deal. In instances where there is a strong local element that has a desire to do things with a neighboring school district but can't get over the top, state mandates and inducements provide the needed push to get it done.

6. When there are conflicts among local interests, state policy can influence the outcome. The state inducements provided stepping stones, support and a sense of direction that allowed communities to compromise on positions that had been taboo for consideration at other times. When conflict of community values clash with the fiscal ability of the local district, state inducements may help to influence the decision making process at the local level. When declining enrollment puts the district into a financial predicament, community traditions and pride can compromise with political reality to enable a different school structure between cooperating communities of similar interests.

The State policy of Iowa provided for financial incentives to encourage small rural school districts to enter into whole grade sharing arrangements. Once a school district entered such an agreement, it was anticipated that those districts would consolidate as a natural consequence of the sharing activity. As observed by one of the participants in the study, "You can't mandate what matters, but if you put money on the stump they will come"! Four of the districts in the study did consolidate after whole grade sharing; however, the other four districts have not followed the same pattern.

The financial policy to get small districts to share has been more successful than was the financial incentives to get districts to consolidate. The state mandates did force many school districts to take advantage of the

financial incentives to share and consolidate, but again, the sharing aspect was more successful than was the permanent "fix" of consolidation. The new state mandates for higher academic standards created financial need in some cases that was eased by sharing and consolidation dollars. The "carrot and the stick" were both instrumental and acted in interrelationship as, in effect, a single state policy.

One observation suggests the reason whole grade sharing was an easier endeavor was that the local school board decided the issue while consolidation was decided by the local voters of all districts involved. More than just educational issues were at stake with consolidation; while whole grade sharing did not evoke the same depth of values about local control.

The superintendents involved in the study agreed that consolidation did not save dollars, but did allow the sharing and consolidated districts to expand curricular offerings. The financial incentives offered to districts that did consolidate gave impetus to many district measures. Local traditions and concerns were overcome by availability of the incentives. Had the state not established new state standards or mandates, there would have been less need for the financial incentives. It appears that the two offerings, one financial and the other as requirements, by the state of Iowa went hand in hand in getting the large number of districts into sharing arrangements.

School districts that once thought they were stable became concerned by the state's position toward their existence. The school district's educational resources and stability were seen to be at risk in relation to the state's mandates and financial incentives which encouraged sharing and the consolidation of small rural school districts.

The effort in all of the districts studied was in large part a result of state mandates, incentives, local district enrollment decline, of a desire to do something before it was mandated, and of finding a viable solution for long term stability. The events in one of the districts took place during the Easter season. It is ironic that an outspoken opponent of the district's consolidation effort used the Easter theme of "feast of your own blood" to try to dissuade voters. The person also extolled the state's incentives as "legal bribery". Some sentiment among the interviewees was that perhaps education was sold out in the process, that the eagerness to take advantage of the state incentives was similar to the 30 pieces of silver or \$24 of trinkets.

The conclusions drawn from this study are as follows:

1. Mandates matter, but not always. State policy makers will need to recognize this inconsistency among local school districts.
2. Inducements can be effective, but not everyone likes carrots. Mandates and inducements can have an interactive effect larger than even both can have independently.
3. Local conditions are the final arbiters in the success of state policy.
 - a. Community feelings of tradition, trust, pride and the desire to govern own destiny are caught

between community values and declining student enrollments. The concern for educational quality, the loss of the high school, the communities children, and the loss of a school facility creates difficult situations.

- b. The real world of public finance, student enrollments, age and quality of buildings, academic quality can overwhelm community values.
- c. Citizens caught between state mandates and state provided inducements may seek the middle ground of compromise, part of something is better than nothing.

Recommendations

State policy makers should note the success of the policies by examining the effect of those policies not only on what happened in Iowa during the late 1980s and early 1990s, but also the effect on the districts during the following years after whole grade sharing/consolidation. Future studies that would add more light to the effectiveness of state policies that lean towards small rural school consolidation and the impact of whole grade sharing could focus on:

- 1. examine more consolidations that resulted from whole grade sharing;
- 2. examine the pattern of success/failure of voter referendums for district financial measures after the districts' consolidation;
- 3. enrollment patterns of the consolidated districts and the stability the districts realized because of the whole grade sharing and consolidation;

4. a study five years after the consolidation wave comparing district's satisfaction with the mergers as compared to the voter approval at the time of the merger;
5. a look at how districts handled the disappearance of the state financial incentives whole grade sharing and for consolidation;
6. a study of the state educational mandates and the impact and maintenance of the standards over time.

The following list contains suggested items that might be gleaned during the information gathering process that might or will have a significant affect on future studies. Given the nature of a naturalistic study, one must keep in mind the possibilities of the addition of such information to a future study or as a basis for a recommendation for future research topics about the Iowa experience of whole grade sharing and consolidation policies.

1. The recent history of the major changes within a school district, including its last experiences regarding whole grade sharing and consolidation.
2. Basic characteristics of the current school district, the geographical size of each sharing partner before consolidation and the consolidated size. Student population trends for the last ten years as separate districts and as whole grade/consolidated districts.
3. The leadership stability of the districts, the number of school board members and superintendents over the last ten

years or during the period of sharing/consolidation activities.

4. The sequence of sharing activities from initial discussions to formal agreements and implementation.
5. Identifying the political forces that were at work during the initial phases of whole grade sharing development, during the implementation phase of whole grade sharing, during the process towards consensus for consolidation. Identifying the barriers or obstacles to the process, and the items that encouraged the sharing process.
6. What were the financial implications for the district during whole grade sharing? Administrative sharing? Consolidation? What were the financial conditions of the separate districts before and during sharing and after consolidation?
7. How were the different district policies handled during the different phases of sharing? What was done to align differing policies and differences in master contracts?
8. What rivalries existed between school districts and communities (athletic or commercial)? Have these rivalries changed and if so how have they changed? Have any of the old rivalries remained to cause problems and why?

A final note to Iowa's policymakers. Since state policy can make a difference, though its effectiveness is always interactive with local values, finances and conditions, it is incumbent upon policymakers to give careful consideration to issues of policy design. Mandates and support, carefully

measured, can cause change, but not always, not at the same speed, and sometimes may fail. It is a question of values, not power, whether that ambiguous outcome is good enough for Iowa. More incentives and a bigger hammer may yield more compliance, but when do state and local interests balance off? In the final analysis, this issue is like so many other state policy issues in being about how we govern ourselves in a federalist democracy.

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APPENDIX A
LEGAL OPINION OF REORGANIZATION AND SHARING PROCEDURES
IOWA ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL BUSINESS OFFICIALS
IOWA SCHOOL BUSINESS MANAGEMENT ACADEMY
MAY 17-20, 1994

LEVEL III
REORGANIZATION AND SHARING

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ASBO OUTLINE

I. Reorganization - school corporation merger.

A. Board role versus citizen role.

A reorganization petition is a citizens' petition. However, it is not uncommon for school boards as elected representatives of the citizenry to act as leaders and facilitators in the formulation of a reorganization petition or to work in conjunction with a local reorganization committee.

B. Reorganization planning.

Many reorganizations are happening currently as an outgrowth of whole grade sharing. In such cases, a school corporation upon reorganization could run almost identically to the whole grade sharing enterprise.

However, school districts may also reorganize without having whole grade shared in advance. In those situations, long term study through a committee process or through solicitation of a feasibility study or both may prove helpful to study such topics as finance, facilities, transportation and personnel among others.

C. Petition elements.

A reorganization petition is not a particularly complex document. Petition elements include:

1. Name of the district.
2. Legal description of the property to be contained within the district.
3. Initial method of selection or election of directors and number of directors.
4. Number and permanent method of election of directors.
5. Division of assets and liabilities (optional).
6. Request to vote a PPEL simultaneously with the reorganization proposition (optional).
7. Any director districts referenced must also be legally described.
8. Affidavits must accompany the petition setting forth the number of registered voters in each district.

9. Reorganization proposals should be consistent with the AEA area plan or seek modification of it.

10. Petitions cannot be presented within six months of a successful bond election.

D. Reorganization as an election issue. Reorganization is treated the same as any other election issue. Therefore, district resources should not be utilized to campaign for a "yes" vote.

E. AEA procedures.

The AEA which contains the districts proposing reorganization (or two AEAs with some special rules applying if districts are from different AEAs), are statutorily charged with receiving and ruling upon reorganization proposals. These procedures include:

1. Fixing a hearing date and an objection deadline and publishing a notice of same.
2. The AEA Board holds a hearing at which proponents and objectors are allowed to give evidence and argument. After receiving such evidence, the AEA will rule on any objections filed. AEAs also effectively rule on objections requesting dismissal of the petition. AEAs have broad authority to change or amend the plan as set forth in the reorganization petition including the right to change the boundaries as requested by petitioners.
3. After hearing and decision by the AEA, the proposition if approved (and if amended as amended) goes to popular vote. The AEA's decision is published.
4. A twenty day appeal period runs from the date of publication of the AEA decision. Only school districts affected (named in the petition) may appeal.
5. A special election is held on the reorganization measure as approved by the AEA. A majority of the electors in each district must approve the reorganization for it to be effective (in a two district reorganization proposition).

F. Reorganization, personnel and Board transition.

The reorganization chapter (275 of the Code) sets forth a transition from pre-existing boards to the newly reorganized district board. The reorganized district board is selected and seated prior to the effective date of the reorganization. Reorganizations approved on or before November 30 of any year become effective the following

July 1. Therefore, for a limited period of time, three boards will operate simultaneously in a two district reorganization, the district A board, the district B board, and the district A-B board.

Employees under continuing contract are not affected by the formation of the new district without affirmative action to modify or terminate such contracts. The authority and responsibility to offer new contracts or to terminate or modify existing contracts is transferred from the existing districts to the board of the new district on the third Tuesday of January prior to the school year reorganization is effective. (275.33(1) of the Code).

G. Reorganization and collective bargaining.

If both districts to a reorganization have a collective bargaining agreement, the district with the largest basic enrollment for the year prior to the reorganization serves as the base agreement and the employees of other districts are accreted to the bargaining unit of that district for purposes of negotiating for following years. If there is only one collective bargaining agreement in effect among districts, then that agreement serves as the base agreement. If the base agreement district and its employees have already agreed on a multi-year contract, commencing before and continuing after the effective date of the reorganization, the base agreement remains in effect as specified in the agreement.

H. Reorganization follow-up.

Numerous tasks follow a successful reorganization vote. Some of those tasks are:

1. 275.41 appointments (if utilized).
2. 275.25 special election (if utilized).
3. Filing legal descriptions and director district descriptions.
4. Real property transfers to aid title.
5. 274.37 concurrent action (if property was excluded to be attached to a contiguous district).
6. Appointment of an acting superintendent and board secretary.
7. Miscellaneous planning matters to potentially include but not be limited to:
 - a. Levies and special elections
 - b. Policies

- c. Transportation
- d. Designation of attendance centers
- e. Building closings
- f. Real property sales
- g. Curriculum
- h. Other matters directly related to change of corporate name, i.e. bank accounts, tax I.D. numbers, vehicle titles.
- i. Asset and liabilities division (if not settled by petition and action at the reorganization hearing).

II. Sharing

A. Personnel or Programmatic Sharing

- 1. 280.15, Code of Iowa, provides that: "Two or more public school districts may jointly employ and share the services of any school personnel, or acquire and share the use of classrooms, laboratories, equipment and facilities...".
- 2. Under this authority school districts share superintendents, principals, curriculum directors, teachers, etc. and programs.
- 3. Many financial incentives to share have been discontinued in recent years.
- 4. The financial incentive for student count relating to students "taught by a teacher who is jointly employed under section 280.15, or attending classes taught by a teacher who is employed by another district" remains. Section 257.11(2), Code of Iowa.
- 5. Personnel Sharing agreements may include the following provisions.
 - a. Term of agreement.
 - b. Identification of individuals.
 - c. Designation of a contracting entity (employer) and definition of supervisory responsibility.
 - d. Contingency clause relating to departure of individual named.
 - e. Notification date re continuation or non-continuation.
 - f. Time allocation.
 - g. Fiscal allocation regarding wages and benefits.
 - h. Possible "fall back" provision to one district employment if there is augmented

salary under the sharing agreement (example Administrator contracts).

i. Statement of obligations to non-contracting district.

B. Whole Grade Sharing

1. This method of contractual corporation among districts to share whole grades has enjoyed great popularity in recent years. Some attendant conceptual difficulties accompany it which do not accompany reorganization.

2. Districts remain separate and distinct corporate entities as opposed to reorganization where a new corporate entity is formed.

3. In the last several years, a small flurry of reorganization has occurred including many districts who have previously whole grade shared.

4. Financial incentives to whole grade share have been discontinued.

5. Entering into or extending or renewing whole grade sharing agreements requires following a particular procedure spelled out in Sections 282.10-.12 of the Code. This includes:

a. Notice of intent to pursue negotiation greater than 90 days prior to signing.

b. Within 30 days of notice, a petition can request the DE to do a feasibility study.

c. Not less than 30 days prior to signing, a public hearing is held at which the proposed agreement is described.

d. Within 30 days prior to signing, affected pupils' parents can request a Board to send their student to a contiguous district. The Board must rule on such requests before signing.

e. Whole grade sharing agreements must be signed by February 1 to be effective the following year.

6. Whole grade sharing can be one way or two way.

7. Costs under whole grade sharing can be as mutually determined in two way agreements and not less than 1/2 of the district cost per pupil of

the sending district in one way whole grade sharing agreements.

8. Common provisions of whole grade sharing agreements may include:

- a. Term of agreement.
- b. Definition of students and services involved and where students will be served and by whom.
- c. Definition of financial arrangements tuition approach; cost sharing formulas; negotiation-arbitration approach, etc.
- d. Transportation arrangements.
- e. Student jurisdiction and discipline.
- f. Staffing.
- g. Study committees.
- h. Conflict resolution - example, liaison committee and arbitration.
- i. Joint meetings.
- j. Curriculum.
- k. Purchasing coordination.
- l. Coordination of use of existing personal property.
- m. Provisions for amendment.
- n. Separability clause.
- o. Statement of intention, notification deadline.

9. Historical problem areas in whole grade sharing.

- a. Section 280.15 - (note: recently amended).
- b. Effect on collective bargaining.
- c. Effect on collective bargaining agreements.

10. Athletic/Extracurricular Sharing - authority is section 280.13A, Code of Iowa.

- a. These logically accompany whole grade sharing agreements of secondary grades. They can also be independent of whole grade sharing.
- b. Agreements must be filed with the appropriate governing organization by April 30 preceding the effective year.
- c. Such agreements may include the following provisions:

- 1. Term.

2. Definition of students and services involved, by whom and where served.
3. Staffing.
4. Financial arrangements.
5. Study committees.
6. Uniforms.
7. Purchasing.
8. Activity tickets.
9. Conference affiliation.
10. Concessions and setup.
11. Eligibility and jurisdiction.
12. Conflict resolution - example, liaison committee and arbitration.
13. Amendment arrangements.
14. Separability clause.
15. Notification of continuation.

[NOTE: This outline is intended to provide general information to help you understand certain basic concepts of Iowa law and is not intended to constitute legal advice. This outline is also of necessity very abbreviated and is not intended to be comprehensive. Certain statutory areas have recently changed. When dealing with matters of school law, it is always suggested that you consult with your school district's attorney if specific legal advice or information is desired. 5/94]

APPENDIX B

RE: REORGANIZATION TIMETABLE

Sample Letter from the School Attorney

March 10, 1995

Superintendent
An Iowa Community School District
Anytown, IA 50000

Re: Reorganization Timetable
Dear Superintendent:

This letter will confirm the telephone conversation which you and AEA Director and I had on this date regarding a possible timetable for events relating to the proposed reorganization of the Iowa Community school District and the Neighbor Community School District.

Assuming that a petition for reorganization of the two districts is received by the Administrator of the AEA on or about March 27, 1995, then the timetable for reorganization activities would be as follows:

First week of April, publish notice of final date for filing objections and date of public hearing

First week of May, final date for filing objections

Second week of May, public hearing re: proposed reorganization

Third week of May, publish notice of decision of AEA Board

Second week of July, earliest date for election concerning reorganization (assuming that the AEA has approved the petition).

If you need any additional information, please contact me.

Sincerely,

School Attorney

APPENDIX C
RE: POST-ELECTION REORGANIZATION PROCEDURES
Example Letter from the School Attorney

September 20, 1995

Superintendent
An Iowa Community School District
Anytown, IA 50000

Re: Post-Election Reorganization Procedures

Dear Superintendent:

You have asked that I provide the Boards of the Iowa and Neighbor Community School Districts with guidance regarding the procedures which they must follow now that the school district reorganization has been approved by the voters. This letter will set out several of the more important obligations of the Boards with regard to the formation of the new district, but I am sure that there will be a number of additional matters that we will need to address in the coming months as well.

The organization meeting of the board of the new district is required to be held within 45 days after the approval of the merger, i.e. within 45 days of September 12. This meeting takes place upon the call of the AEA Administrator. (See Iowa Code Section 275.41(4)).

Prior to the organization meeting of the new board, the Boards of the Iowa Community school District and the Neighbor Community School District are required to designate the directors who are to be retained as members of the initial board of the new district. Thus, this is the first thing that the two existing boards must accomplish and it must take place within the 45-day period following September 12. (See Iowa Code Section 275.41(2)).

When the new board conducts its organizational meeting, it should elect a president. The new board should then appoint an acting superintendent and an acting board secretary. (See Iowa Code Sections 279.1 and 274.441(5)).

Since there was territory excluded from the new district, the Boards of the Neighbor Community School District and the Larger Community School District will need to take concurrent action to adjust their boundaries. This process is referred to as "concurrent action". (See Iowa Code Sections 275.22 and 274.37).

The acting secretary is required to file a written description of the boundaries with the county auditor of each county in which any portion of the school corporation lies. This filing should include the boundaries of the school district and the boundaries of the director districts. (See Iowa Code Sections 275.22 and 274.4).

Prior to July 1, 1996, the new board must approve a plan for the replacement of the initial board. The details of this requirement are set forth in Iowa Code Section 275.41(3). We can discuss these requirements at greater length when the new board is prepared to adopt a plan.

The new board has control over the employment of all personnel for the new district. This means that the new board will need to make a decision regarding any possible staff reduction which might result from reorganization. The final dates for these actions are April 30, 1996 for teachers and May 15, 1996 for administrators. The date for teachers may be sooner than April 30, 1996, if either collective bargaining agreement provides for notification prior to that date. However, the new board may not exercise its power to issue or terminate contracts until the third Tuesday of January in 1996. (See Iowa Code Sections 275.41(4) and 275.33(1)).

The new board also has the power to "establish policy, organize curriculum, enter into contracts and complete such planning and take such action as is essential for the efficient management of the newly formed community school district". (See Iowa Code Section 275.41(4)).

Thus, the new board must, at a minimum, take the following actions prior to July 1, 1996:

1. Adopt policies for the governance of the new district.
2. Negotiate a collective bargaining agreement for the teachers of the new district. Note, however, that Iowa Code Section 275.33(2) provides that the collective bargaining agreement of the district with the largest basic enrollment shall serve as the base agreement for the new district.
3. Determine attendance centers and boundary lines for attendance centers.
4. Establish a curriculum and adopt textbooks.
5. Establish routes for the transportation of students and enter into agreements with bus drivers.

6. Determine whether any buildings or portions of buildings are to be closed.

7. Complete all business transactions associated with the change in the corporate name, i.e. bank accounts, tax ID numbers, vehicle titles, etc.

Finally, between July 1, 1996 and July 20, 1996, the new Board must meet with the boards of the school districts affected by the organization of the new district, including the boards of the school districts receiving territory from the affected school districts and attempt to reach agreement upon an equitable division of assets of the several school corporations and an equitable allocation of the liabilities of the affected school corporations. (See Iowa Code Section 275.29).

If you have any additional questions or would like assistance in completing any aspect of the reorganization process, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

School Attorney